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Formal learning and research as part of a systems approach to team development

Cecily Miriam Boas
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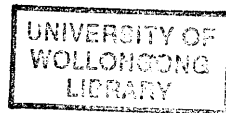
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**FORMAL LEARNING AND RESEARCH
AS PART OF A SYSTEMS APPROACH TO TEAM DEVELOPMENT**



**A Thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the
degree of Master of Education (Honours)**

from

University of Wollongong

by

Cecily Miriam Boas (Dip Ed., Grad Dip. Special Ed.)

Faculty of Education 1996

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is a qualitative case study describing effects of a facilitator/researcher on team building in a workplace.

The study found that complexities of team development cannot be addressed solely by external consultants facilitating learning processes. There are many other emic and etic elements to be taken into consideration. When external 'experts' are involved, this study indicates that they need to be fully supported by management and engaged over a long period of time working within the overall structure of the organisation.

The study highlighted a key role of the facilitator/researcher as providing opportunities for developing reflective practices in workplaces. Such reflection can be encouraged through the use of appropriate experiential learning practices in the realm of personal development.

Another important finding of this research is that external professional support on an on-going basis adds to the process of team development by creating opportunities for lasting relationships to develop between the facilitator/researcher and a working group. This supportive role includes that of independent confidante to workers.

Ethical issues, such as confidentiality and concern for individuals' well being proved to be necessary to address in experiential learning in the workplace because of possible personal effects on people's lives.

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FORMAL LEARNING AND RESEARCH AS PART OF A SYSTEMS APPROACH TO TEAM DEVELOPMENT

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Training is now firmly centre stage in most organisations.

Clark, N, 1991

There is no simple way to develop a team. It is a complex, long-term process in which facilitation of individual and group learning can have a meaningful place, when it is combined with other strategies. Facilitated team learning cannot alone be expected to provide the answer to team development.

This study involved an investigation into the role of a facilitator/researcher in a team building program at the "Tailor's Valley" (pseudonym) Child Care Centre (hereafter referred to as the Centre). The study involved the disciplines of both education and management. It generated a grounded theory of the impact of combined facilitation of personal development exercises in an experiential learning mode and research on that process, on a team of workers. The findings from the data collected relate to formal and informal learning processes and the nature and make up of the team and how it functioned. The study also addresses how the formal learning processes, in concert with the research process, affected the group of people who work together in the Centre.

The data gathered through this study indicate that personal input by the facilitator into the team, through casual and formal interactions with staff members over an extended period of time, can have a beneficial effect on how team members work together. The interactions I had with staff, as a facilitator and researcher, provided valuable information about facilitation and the nature of team interactions. The effects, on the participants who took part in team building exercises and the research process, such as their heightened awareness of their own behaviours and of each other, the interactions between the team members, and their increased practice of reflection on many relationship and work related issues, were quite noticeable.

QUESTIONS THE STUDY WILL ADDRESS

This thesis will look at both the effectiveness and ethical considerations of experiential learning in personal development facilitation in team building exercises involving an external facilitator/researcher. It is important to consider ethical issues because of the impact personal development courses can have on participant well-being and human interaction.

Questions arose in areas of personal development; facilitated learning experiences; change in team interaction as a result of facilitation and follow-up activities; consideration of ethical issues in both experiential learning facilitation and research; the workers' role in planning activities; and critical factors affecting the success or other impact of facilitation. These critical factors included: numbers of staff involved; the inclusion of the whole team; support and involvement of management; on-going staff learning; facilitator input; worker interest; environment; and support from

peers during and following the course work.

Therefore, the research question governing this study is:

“What effect does the facilitator/researcher, using personal development exercises, have on team building in a workplace?”

In order to assess outcomes of facilitator/researcher involvement with a workgroup, a case study was undertaken in a qualitative design in order to gain greater understanding of the needs of workers involved in courses designed for team building. The findings have led to recommendations for organisations to consider in the use of formal learning processes as part of team development. The study does not reveal quick, easy answers to building a better team; rather it outlines the complex nature of teams and the need to address issues in an ongoing, holistic way.

CONSIDERING THE PROBLEM

There are many facets to the issues surrounding team development and the use of personal development processes to achieve greater team cohesion. Many organisations use sets of ‘personal development’ exercises in an attempt to create more functional teams and to enhance team performance. Management appear to see this type of exercise as a way to increase the efficiency of their workforce and create an atmosphere of harmony amongst workers. Improved communication, conflict resolution skills and problem-solving strategies in relationships at work are seen to be instrumental in creating a more comfortable, satisfying, and productive place in which to work. Organisations often use this approach to address team development,

instead of addressing the overall system and the corporate culture of the organisation.

The Role of External Facilitators in Team building

Management often has an expectation that formal learning experiences will provide answers to building better teams, which will address *all* the issues and resolve *all* the team's conflicts. External facilitators are brought in as 'experts' to be the catalysts for change, delivering their expert knowledge to 'novice' recipients. This gives no credence to participants' roles and responsibilities for their own knowledge and expertise (Turbill, 1993). When the desired changes do not happen, as is often the case, the facilitator, and/or the material/content, is often blamed by management (and others) or having failed. There is a shift of responsibility to an external influence, rather than an assessment of joint accountability.

My experience as a facilitator in workplaces has shown that many organisations request one-off formal learning sessions in personal development, lasting anywhere from several hours to several days, to address team issues. These are interspersed with an array of other courses, including technical skills training. There is usually no overall plan for sequencing team or personal (or organisational) learning or making a particular topic area the focus for an extended period of time. This has the effect of each new course outweighing the last in importance. As a facilitator, the disjointed approach in these situations has concerned me.

Personal development courses are often seen as a quick-fix to a complex issue. It puts the emphasis on the individual for responsibility for the way things work, or do not work. The writings of Dunphy (1993), Senge (1993),

and Turbill (1993) reinforce my finding, that courses in personal development on their own do not build a coherent working team. Short-term courses are even less effective. Learning about being part of a team is merely one part of a much more complex system.

The term 'training' is widely used in relation to individual and organisational learning. This can give the impression of a deficit model of staff learning, indicating that the 'trainer' has knowledge and skills that she can impart to those who do not have the benefit of this expertise. There is a trend in some organisations to change the word 'training' and instead to use the term 'learning and development,' to imply a more democratic image of organisational and individual learning to give credit to abilities staff already have. I have used the phrases of 'facilitation' and 'formal learning' throughout my thesis to give the emphasis to learning as a participatory activity. The term 'facilitator' is used instead of 'trainer', also, in an attempt to express more equality in the learning process in that I see the facilitator as also a learner.

Personal Development Courses

Learning in the area of personal development is often seen as a key to managing conflicts and change processes and as essential for building teams (Clarke, 1991). It is seen to provide *the* answer, rather than being part of an answer. This concept of formal learning as a means of building better workplace teams has been encouraged by such phenomena as the 'training guarantee' levied on organisations by the Australian Federal Government, establishing training firmly in organisational management plans and culture.

Courses in personal development typically involve staff in examining their personal behaviours and attitudes and reflecting on patterns of interaction and work practices. Courses can cover a variety of areas including self-concept, communication styles, empathy, understanding the influence of personalities on working relationships, appropriate assertiveness, co-operative power, coping with conflicts, negotiation skills and managing emotions.

Personal development exercises usually involve people in various interactive activities, either individually or in small or large groups. They can include oral and written exercises, role plays, listening to others, reading materials, or making presentations. These exercises are designed to elicit reflective thinking about behaviours and attitudes and to encourage participants to make personal assessments of themselves in order to be aware of how they function in the world. In most instances, staff are expected to attend these courses without being given options for non-attendance.

This study was undertaken within the workplace, using, as a starting point, a personality-type exercise (the D.I.S.C.) as an initial method of influencing team performance through creating a level of understanding of personal and peer behaviour. It considered the continuing effects of the exercise on team development. The difficulties experienced by staff involved in the personality type exercise were also examined. Personality type experiences in this study involved the use of a simple model referred to as the D.I.S.C., each letter signifying a particular personality type (D = direct; I = influencer; S = stabiliser; and C = conscientious).

The exercise used was taken from the Conflict Resolution Network's (CRN)¹ program, developed in 1989. The D.I.S.C. exercise was taken from the section of the CRN course related to empathy. Participants were given the opportunity to understand their own and others' personality types as defined originally by Jung (1928), redefined by Myers-Briggs (1968) and modified for this exercise. The exercise involved consideration of how people work together, their needs in relation to their personality type and how they could relate to each other from a more informed position.

When a group of people working together understand and respect their own personality traits and those of other members of their team, they are more likely to be able to work effectively together (Myers-Briggs, 1972). They begin to understand some of the reasons others respond and behave the way they do, and hence they are more likely to interact appropriately. Also, the more they understand their own feelings, the less they will 'fall prey to them' (Gardner, 1993, p253).

The study did not aim to analyse individual personality traits or comment on the many personality inventories in existence. There is already ample literature on this area (Bolton, 1985; Briggs Myers, 1962; Briggs Myers, 1983; Cattell & Kline, 1977; Dahlstrom, Welsh & Dahlstrom, 1973; Deaux, Reid, Mizrahi, & Eithier, 1995; Eisenstadt & Lappe, 1994; Eysenck, 1988; Eysenck, 1990; Eysenck & Eysenck, 1956; Furnham & Henderson, 1982; Jung, 1923; Olson & Johnson, 1991; Pinkney, 1983; Tracey, 1994; and Tzeng, 1991).

My experience as a facilitator of personal development courses over several years has led me to the conclusion that long-term follow-up after work-

¹ CRN is a network of people working in the area of conflict resolution as facilitators & mediators. The CRN was established in Sydney, partly to assist people to learn techniques in conflict resolution.

based personal development courses is rare. There is a variety of reasons why this follow-up might not occur: in some instances, management does not consider that there is enough expertise in the organisation to continue with personal development as part of an ongoing process; in other situations, there is a perception that there is not enough time (or finances) for more in-depth development; and managers may not see that personal development is essential to their intended outcomes. Personal development courses also compete for finances with other areas of learning. Sometimes they appear to be introduced as a superficial demonstration to employees that the organisation is truly interested and cares about them.

Personal development courses can engender high levels of enthusiasm from participants when the course work captures their imagination. This enthusiasm is not usually reinforced when the participants return to the work environment. The innovative thinking and influence of their new learning from the courses is often undermined. This may occur because the process was conducted away from the workplace so that there is no direct connection back to the work situation. It may be that an individual has undergone a learning process that other work peers have not experienced and therefore have no empathy for that experience. In my experience as a course participant and as a facilitator, even when courses are conducted at work, or with a work-based team, the actual work situation or system does not generally reinforce the course input, perhaps because it is too different from the actual situation or the entrenched culture of the organisation. It may not fit into the current schema of the organisation.

As a result, learning in the area of personal development itself is a complex matter. It is not known how instruction in this realm in the workplace is

ideally accomplished. Nor are there reliable measures for determining the extent to which learning has been successful or what success means (Gardner, 1993).

Clark (1991) considers that the effectiveness of a learning event in fostering personal change is largely determined by the facilitator's ability and the relationship between learner and facilitator. The facilitator's own personality has a symbiotic effect on others involved in courses. Other factors that influence change through facilitated learning include: the quality of the presentation and the course materials; the length of the course; the environment; prior experiences and expectations; the construct put on it by the individuals involved; their personality types and intelligences; their prior experiences with this type of input and their knowledge or lack of knowledge about personal constructs; the effect it has on them and others; their status in the organisation; their commitment to their workplace and the team with whom they work; the commitment of the organisation to deep level change; support and involvement from management; and, the importance management puts on the particular type of learning.

Although there is not a great deal of documented evidence showing results in this field, many claims about the success of courses are made by facilitators and participants:

It [Integro DiSC training] is open, honest and has improved communication at all levels of the organisation.

(Cyanamid Australia, 1995)

It has enabled us to adapt our behaviour and communicate more effectively which in turn benefits our working relationships.

(State Super Investment and Management Corporation, 1995)²

² From the Integro Learning Systems Pty Ltd brochure on DiSC Accreditation Training 1995

Comments such as these are often not supported by appropriate substantiation. They are usually created from hearsay and used to encourage others to participate in programs provided by organisations who conduct them.

Team Development

As with personal development activities, team development cannot be considered in isolation. Much has been written about the many factors that influence how people work together, including the work of Gardner (1983) on levels of intelligence, Herrmann (1993) on brain dominance, Myers-Briggs (1983) on personality traits and Senge (1993) on systems thinking. Situation, time, place and organisational goals and environment all have an effect on learning outcomes (Turbill, 1993). Senge (1993) notes the importance of looking at the whole organisation in its many dimensions to address the way that people work together.

Team building involves far more than personal learning. Turbill (1993) found in her study of teacher learning that factors involved in initiating and supporting change processes included long-term training, facilitator support, management support, reflection with peers and continued learning opportunities. A variety of strategies is advisable, including needs assessment, initial and follow-up learning experiences, structural assessment and organisational change where necessary. Senge (1993) considers that it is essential for an organisation to use ongoing strategies to reinforce personal growth. Other elements necessary to ensure uptake of new strategies include: personal motivation and reflection; the desire to learn; a sense of power and commitment to change; group dialogue and thinking; and acknowledgment that there are not likely to be simple

answers to complex issues.

I believe, as a facilitator/researcher, that there is a need for management to support a long-term approach to team building. Part of this approach includes provision for ongoing contact with a facilitator on a one-to-one basis as well as with the group. This can provide an opportunity for reflection on learning and the state of the work group and the individual's place within it. It is often more useful for the facilitator to be external to the organisation to allow for more freedom of expression to what participants can view as an unbiased person, someone without deeply vested interests in the organisational hierarchy.

RATIONALE FOR THE METHODS USED

To study these complex issues qualitative, rather than quantitative, research methods have been used because they provide a more detailed picture of human interactions in regular, everyday situations. Quantitative research often reflects a paradigm where human beings are seen as predictable and controllable in terms of numerical variables, which purport to describe behaviours and interactions. Little allowance is left for the rich diversity of individual personalities in a constant process of development or redevelopment. Grounded theory, in a constructivist, emergent inquiry, was chosen to provide me with an opportunity to balance exploration of the participants' views with my observations over a period of time, as I drew upon individual and group data. It also allowed the subjects to become active participants in the research.

OUTCOMES OF THIS STUDY

There is evidence, as shown in Chapter Two of this thesis, to indicate that it is difficult to confirm or repudiate whether personal development courses designed for team development have any significant long-term effect on the way people work in a team. People do not necessarily make changes to their way of doing things in a short period of time. The results of a particular learning experience may not become immediately obvious, depending on a number of variables, including personality, timing, situation, previous experiences, the particular types of courses, the skills of the facilitator, the environment, the commitment of the participants and management, and many others. This does not mean that the participants have not been affected by what has been presented to them. They may, at a later stage, integrate what they have learned into their daily practice.

The data collected in this study showed that the short-term effect of the initial formal learning process had some impact on the team members approaches to each other. What appeared to make more of a difference was the opportunity the staff members had to reflect on the learning experiences and their working relationships in an *ongoing* process, which this research enabled and that was encouraged by the Director of the Centre.

As a result, this study indicates that attendance at courses on team development alone may not have a significant impact on how a team develops. It needs to be seen as part of a holistic approach that involves aspects of the entire system within which groups function. If changes are to be effective, it is necessary to gain understanding and commitment of all those involved in these overall approaches to change. This must be done with open consultation processes throughout the workforce.

During the course of the study, it became clear to me that the general concept of a 'team' encourages a narrow approach to team building. A 'team' is seen as a group of people working together toward a common goal. This definition does not acknowledge the many exogenous and endogenous elements that influence a group of people who work together. I see a team as a changing, amorphous element that cannot be defined in a linear or even a three-dimensional way. Its form and function depend on current circumstances that are affecting it.

LIMITATIONS AND ASSUMPTIONS

Only the one workplace was studied for the development of this thesis. This limits the findings to this workplace. Some of the general findings might be transferable in instances where there are many commonalities with other workplaces.

In this study, I do not provide prescriptive or conclusive directions showing how to improve team effectiveness. I have provided some key points for consideration in the approach managers can take toward team building. The answers for individual workplaces need to be found from within each organisation.

DESCRIPTION OF TERMS USED IN THIS STUDY

There are discipline-specific terms that appear in this thesis. A clarification of these terms follows:

'Constructivist' approach to inquiry indicates that the position taken is from the person who is making the observation or judgement of the situation. It provides a flexible means of viewing human characteristics, beliefs and behaviours, allowing for different perspectives on the same situation viewed by different actors.

'Critical Thinking' refers to the close examination of issues. It is not fault finding. Critical thinking involves a person in identifying and challenging assumptions that they may previously have accepted as fact, and that may have become habitual ways of thinking and acting. It is a way of double-checking something before accepting it as a certainty.

'Experiential Learning' refers to learning processes that involve participants in exercises that entail them in active participation in facilitated learning processes through discussion, verbal sharing, creative activities and other exercises that engage them in activities within the group.

'Facilitation' refers to a process where one person is engaged to lead a group of people in a formal learning process by conducting learning exercises and providing learning resources for participants.

'Facilitator' in this case, is an external consultant brought in to conduct learning and development sessions with staff. In this study, because the facilitator was also the researcher, the role also included interviewing and report writing.

'Formal learning' signifies a process where a specific time is set aside for learning experiences of a working group to take place. These experiences are provided in set times, in an attempt to create a situation where pre-

determined concepts are considered by the group.

'Personal Development' is a term used for ease of reference. In this instance, it refers to staff consideration of their own personalities as they relate to the workplace in particular. Of course, people are developing their personal lives every moment of their lives.

'Personal Development Courses' refers to courses designed to explore individuals' understanding of themselves and others. In the courses, staff consider personal issues, behaviour, motivations and relationships and reflect on options and choices in personal growth. Many different strategies are used, including personal reflection of feelings and perspectives of self and others. An example of this type of course is an exercise in self-esteem which could include sharing of ideas of the meaning of 'self-esteem', how people form self-esteem, what influences it and how it can be changed. Several exercises could be undertaken to examine the self-valuing. The courses can vary in their content and can be conducted over varied periods of time, from one or two hours to several days.

'Staff Development' refers to a variety of approaches to increasing staff skills and knowledge. It can include formal learning facilitation, counselling, and personal and professional development.

'Systems' refers to the concept of a whole organisation and all the parts that interrelate to create the way it works. Systems in organisations refer to the way the organisation is structured and how the parts are connected in time and space. Each part has an influence on the rest.

'Team' is taken as a group of people who work together in a high level of intercommunication. This is not always the case in workplace groups that involve a wide variety of others in their interactions.

'Team development and Team building' are interchangeable terms used to denote the growth of synergy in a group of people working together.

CHAPTER TWO

PERSPECTIVES

Qualitative research is a set of social processes characterised by fragile and temporary bonds between persons attempting to share their lives and create a larger and wider understanding of the world.

Lincoln, 1990

Education is opening the eye of the soul and clearing its vision. Do that which is right in your own eyes, but first make sure that your eyes see with perfect clearness what is really good.

Socrates (in Conform, 1974)

INTRODUCTION

The body of information reviewed in the literature survey for this study complemented my professional experience and the research findings that emerged during the course of writing this thesis. The review of the literature is set within different paradigms of constructivism and positivism. These two paradigms may seem to be in contradiction to each other and yet in certain circumstances, they can work side by side. For example, one can set a position and see that it can be a base from which to work, and then allowing for variations due to changing circumstances and shifting perspectives. What is required is a multiplicity of perspectives, which enrich and complement each other. This study acknowledges these points of view with regard to the researcher/facilitator perspective of team building and facilitation in experiential learning.

Practice and literature overlapped and informed each other throughout the study. This resulted in a series of new connections being made to complement what is already known in the development of a pathway for the study of team building and facilitation.

In qualitative research, no single description, model or theory is complete (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The researcher can discover what may be significant in what is already known, rather than finding what is new (Schratz & Walker, 1995). Guba and Lincoln (1989) asserted that literature is not the ultimate truth and is only part of the research equation. It provides an understanding of the links between the literature, my experience and the parameters of the current study. An interdisciplinary search for theories was used to support the far-ranging needs of this particular study. Consequently, I have drawn on literature from areas as broad as education, research, facilitation, psychology, management, systems thinking and conflict resolution. These areas translated into the specific domains of facilitation, teams, staff roles, and research methods all of which were linked by the issue of ethics, as shown in the following diagram.

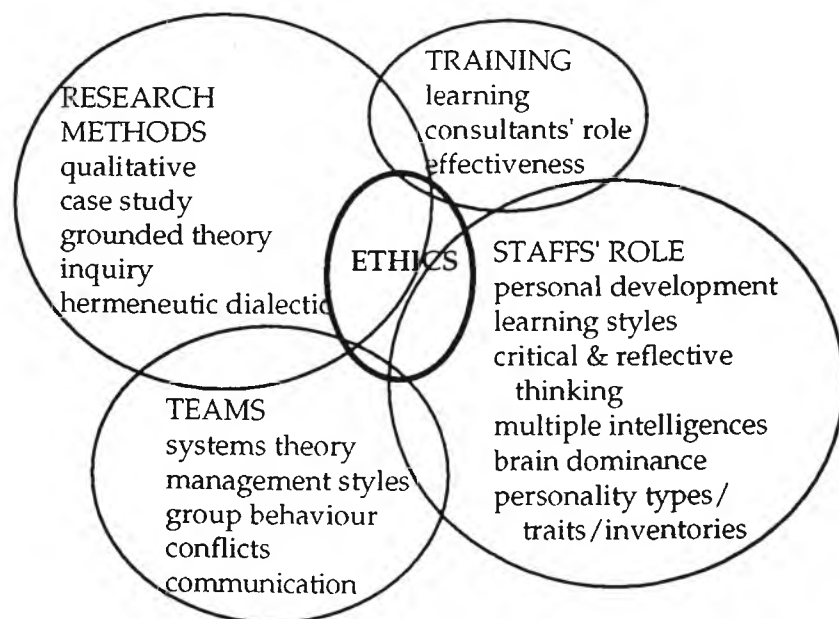


Figure 2.1
Literature Review Categories

This review of the literature will begin with an exploration of the effectiveness of facilitation and aspects of learning. It involves discussion of some theories relating to personality, personality types, multiple intelligences and brain dominance, and factors they have in common. It will explore the facilitator's role as facilitator and review workplace learning processes that involve critical and reflective thinking.

The study then moves on to a discussion of concepts of change, leading into a consideration of team composition and its dynamics. Systems theory will be reviewed as it relates to facilitation and team building. The theory behind the research methods of this study will then be outlined. The overriding issue of ethics in relation to the facilitator/researcher's role in interactions with participants will be considered, and finally the researcher's relevant background will be summarised. It will consider the links between the ethics involved in both facilitation, particularly in experiential learning experiences in the personal development realm, and research.

FACILITATION AND LEARNING

Effects of Conducting Personal Development Courses in a Workplace

This study originated from a series of exercises held in The Tailor's Valley Child Care Centre over a period of several months. The process was designed to address the issue of team building and used personal development exercises as part of this process. This practice is common in workplace facilitations.

Several authors including Gardner (1993), Herrmann (1993), and Myers-Briggs (1972) claimed that there were many benefits to be gained by both employers and employees in conducting this type of exercise. These benefits include knowing oneself better in order to be able to achieve personal goals and be aware of one's place in the workforce; understanding how and why others behave as they do, in order to increase tolerance of different working styles; and learning new ways of behaving to complement usual responses.

Myers-Briggs (1983) asserted that when individuals know their own personality type, they can use this knowledge to increase personal opportunities by understanding their own processes. They are then able to use a combination of diverse roles as needed, depending on the context of the situation. While Myers-Briggs work on creating a framework for personality types, which is widely used in team building, can be used in a positivist and fixed fashion, it can also be used merely as a base from which to work, without tenaciously adhering to a particular position.

There may be some risks in undertaking personal development experiential learning facilitations in workplaces. People may be stereotyped through the use of personality-type inventories. Once an individual's behaviour is seen as predictable, there is a possibility of someone else being able to manipulate it (Cattell & Kline, 1977). As a result of reflections on the literature, observations in the current study and past experience, I was able to observe that there were many other risks of which facilitators need to be aware. These include: the vulnerability participants experience in revealing more information about themselves than might be appropriate; opening up personal issues without being able to follow them through; participants building unrealistic personal expectations of themselves; making participants feel inadequate in their own development as they compare

themselves with others in the group; giving people small amounts of knowledge and information that could be misinterpreted and used inappropriately; and creating an atmosphere of judgement of others.

Many organisations require their employees to attend personal development courses. Senge (1993) asserted that this is an infringement on a person's freedom of choice and that embarking on any path of personal growth is a matter of choice. No one can be forced to develop personal mastery. In my experience, I have also observed that, in some instances, those who were reluctant to participate have actually acknowledged that they gained some useful and important insights into themselves and others with whom they work and have at least been given the opportunity to learn. Their involvement in these exercises often adds a healthy air of scepticism and critical thinking to the facilitation experience.

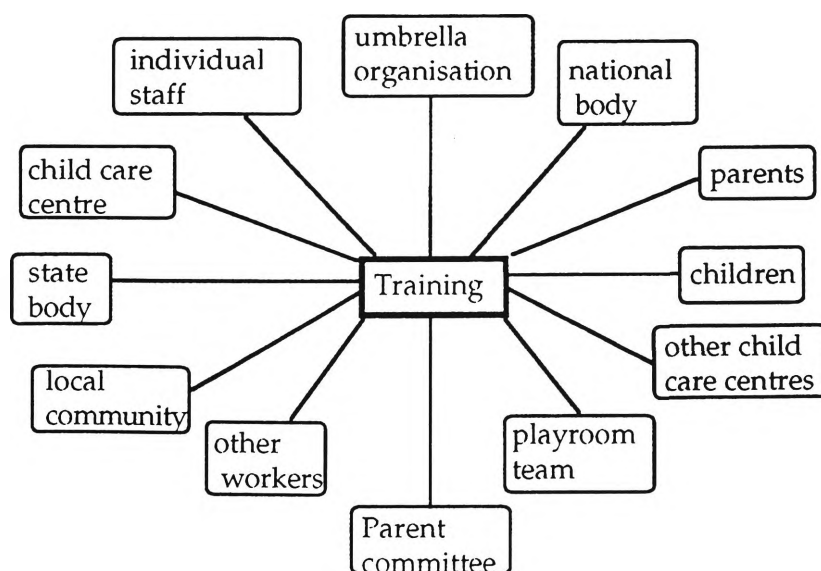
Because there are so many factors of which to be wary, it does not necessarily follow that the practice of learning and development as a formal process in personal development in workplaces needs to be discarded altogether (Senge, 1993). It is necessary to be aware that there are inherent risks in any personal learning exercise and to be able to assess these and act to contain and manage them in order to minimise possible detrimental effects on participants. The concerns about using personal development learning in a workplace might indicate that it is not wise to use them; and at the same time, "we might also still be using candles to read by" (Pond, personal communication, 1995).

The Effectiveness of Formal Learning as Part of Team Development

Whether these exercises provide useful outcomes or not is another

significant element to consider. Assessment of their success is difficult. Turbill (1993) stated that there was overwhelming evidence that staff development programs, and the expected change as a result of implementation of such programs, have not resulted in lasting change. The facilitation itself is not an end state but a stage in the cycle of team development. Gardner (1983) claimed that ideal methods of instruction in the personal realm are unknown. Where changes do occur, following participation in the exercises, they may not be immediately apparent and so are difficult to measure. Personal changes usually take place over a long period of time, as people integrate aspects of what they have learnt into their lives.

Facilitation of experiential learning of personal development type exercises is unlikely to affect only those people who participate. It is inclined to have an effect on others with whom the participants interact. In this case, that includes children, their parents and others connected with the centre. Figure 2.2 illustrates the links from the facilitation and the possible organisations and people it could affect.



*Figure 2 .2
Facilitation Links That Were Apparent in the Child Care Centre*

Many authors provide recipes for making facilitation effective and outline key elements to consider. Group learning is a component of successful learning that deserves mention. Brookfield (1988) and Clark (1991) believed that successful learning is frequently located in a social network. They emphasise that facilitation, in order to be (most) effective, needs to take place within the workplace setting. Work groups learn best when they are together rather than being separated. Vygotsky (1978) asserted that “internal developmental processes” operate when there is interaction and cooperation between people. When a group of people experience the same facilitation program together, they can take their own learning back to their regular work and reinforce each other’s learning through a sharing of experience and reflections. They are less likely to feel isolated in whatever new-found knowledge and skills they have acquired. Senge (1993) believed that quality learning relationships among key members of an organisation have an extraordinary impact on the larger organisation. When small groups of people become deeply committed and open to experience, they create a microcosm of a learning organisation and provide a model for others. When they recognise, appreciate and acknowledge one another’s contributions, through giving and receiving positive feedback, energy is fed back into the group process and they become part of, what Senge termed, a “learning organisation.” The Australian Committee for Training Curriculum (ACTRAC, 1994) refers to this type of learning as collaborative learning, which it sees as the highest form of learning.

Components of Facilitation

Because each workplace has its own particular learning needs and requirements, it is not possible to find one type of personal development learning that will suit all of them. Hence, facilitation strategies need to be

flexible and be based on feedback and experience from participants.

Contributions to facilitation components, style and outcomes arise from factors endogenous and exogenous to the training group involved. Endogenous influences relate to participator and facilitator roles and attitudes; facilitation methods; competence of the facilitator; the facilitator's rapport with the participants and the organisation; the quality and applicability of the facilitation materials and their relevance to the particular workforce. Exogenous influences in relation to facilitation include organisational openness and support, and approaches to ethical issues, events, atmosphere and climate. The following diagram (Figure 2.3) has been constructed to show the endogenous and exogenous influences that can affect facilitation.

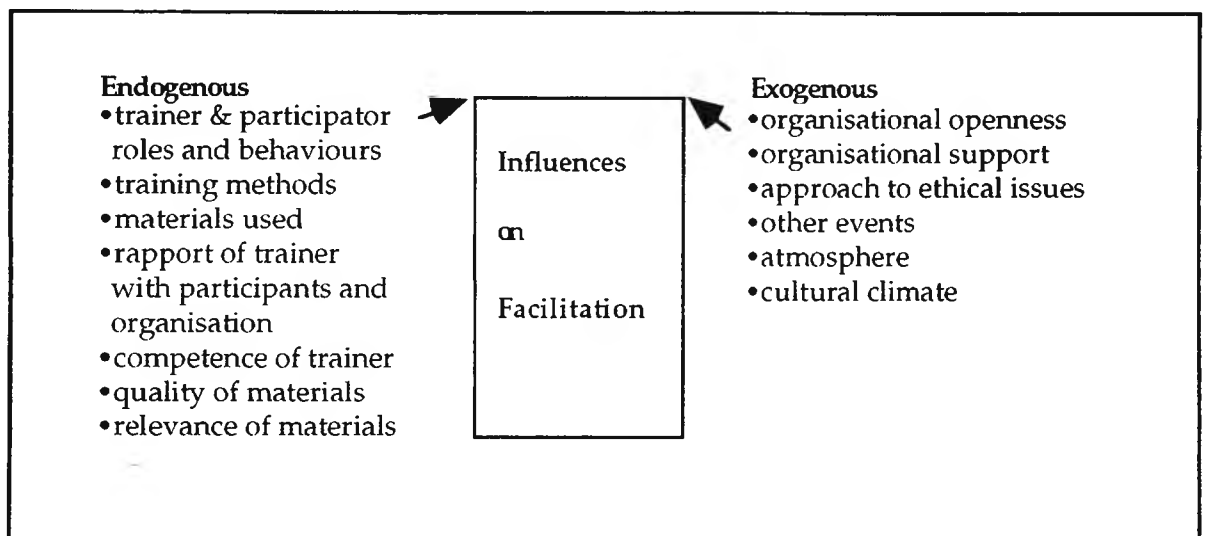


Figure 2.3

A Compilation of the Influences on Facilitation (devised by the author)

Facilitation is frequently used as a mechanistic solution to organisational problems. Most facilitation specifications are not clearly defined, and the facilitation undertaken may not be the best solution to the problem. It could possibly create more problems because the core issues are not made clear and are unable to be addressed in facilitations. When organisations

call upon experienced facilitators, the organisations often do not have a clear idea of what is required to address their needs or even what those basic needs may be. This usually means that outcomes are different from expectations, both for the organisation and the individuals involved with the facilitations.

The Facilitator's Role in The Process of Formal Learning in a Workplace

Where facilitation is seen as effective, part of the equation for that effectiveness is the facilitator. There are very many characteristics and behaviours that contribute to maximum effectiveness. Primarily, effective facilitators are highly proficient at facilitation and possess well-refined skills in creating the best possible opportunities for learning to take place. They have the expertise to be able to tackle the task at hand with confidence and be able to seek further assistance and support when a situation is not within their field of competence. They are able to anticipate possible personal and organisational anxieties and doubts (Clark, N, 1991 and Clark, T, 1991).

Clark N (1991) believed that the facilitator's task was to initially identify prevailing conditions and see the interrelatedness of factors that have a major impact on the system within which they operate. They assess and understand the parameters and realities of client expectations and the nature of the situation.

Factors that may contribute to the ineffectiveness of facilitations include, in my experience, lack of interest of participants, poor preparation and lack of knowledge or skills on the part of the facilitator, poor quality materials, inappropriate subject matter or timing, a lack of understanding of adult learning principles by the facilitator, non-cooperation or lack of interest and

support by senior management in facilitations, and short-term and one-off facilitation sessions.

Because consultants are outside organisations and are transitional, they can be seen to provide a safe sounding board for exploring new ideas without the risks of directly putting those ideas into practice (Senge, 1993). If actual outcomes do not achieve expected results, the responsibility can be seen as lying with the consultant, not within the organisation.

No matter what length of time facilitators are retained by an organisation, it is important that when they do leave, they plan their departure from the group. This involves a sharing of results to inform the facilitator and the client group of outcomes to provide the organisation with the opportunity to continue implementation of learning processes in a sustained learning system. They need to have put some strategies in place to deal with possible unresolved issues. Allowing for time and resources to complete these tasks adequately is crucial.

Senge (1993) maintained that the role of facilitators, as promoters of dialogue, is to help people maintain ownership of the learning process and its outcomes. They keep the dialogue moving, walking a careful line between being knowledgeable and helpful, and not taking on the expert mantle that would shift attention away from the members of the team and their own ideas and responsibility for their own learning.

It is not the sole responsibility of the facilitator to reach satisfactory outcomes. Each of those involved - the facilitator, the employer and the participant - play a part in the success or otherwise of formal learning experiences. The facilitator is responsible for assessment of the situation,

diagnosis and implementation of strategies; the employer's role is to give formal learning due recognition, plan for continuation and follow-up of formal learning, and support participants in the formal learning situation; the participants need to recognise their responsibility for their own learning and be willing to participate. The following diagram (Figure 2.4) shows the connecting responsibilities of all those involved in formal learning.

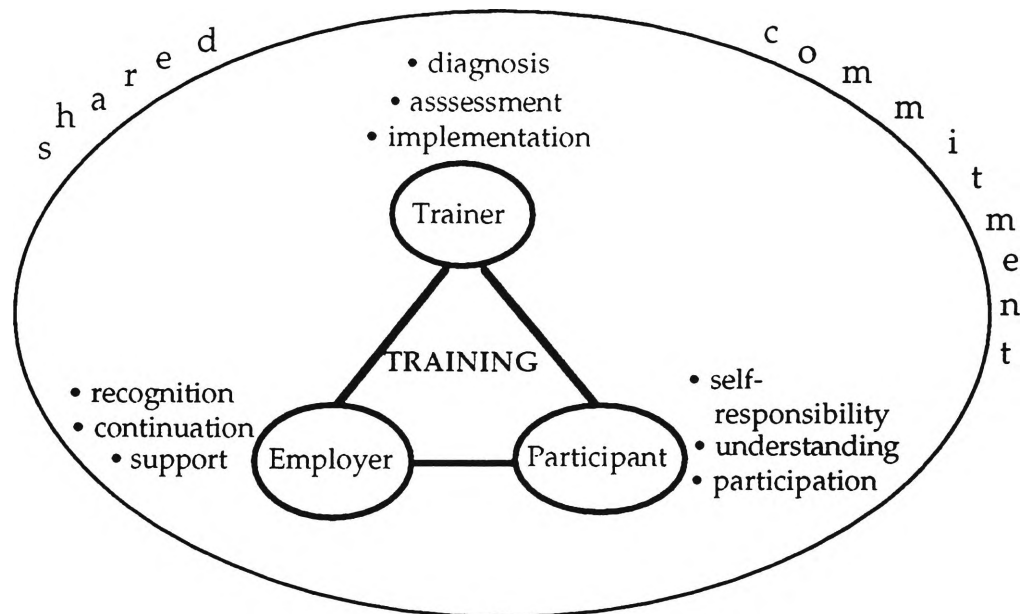


Figure 2.4
Training connections and responsibilities (compiled by the researcher)

Clark (1991) pointed out that, throughout any learning event, facilitators need to be involved in an action-research process where they continually make choices about the selection and presentation of information, design and implementation. They need to consider their responses to the needs and behaviour of participants.

Formalised Learning in a Workplace

Formalised learning in workplaces involves consideration of the principles of adult learning. Merely providing information to people is not enough to create a condition for learning. Learning always involves new

understanding, new behaviours, thinking and doing. Senge (1993) emphasised his belief that people learn what they need to learn, when they need to learn it, not what and when someone else thinks they need to learn. Experiential learning provides for dynamic involvement by participants to create an active learning environment. It allows for feedback and reflection to take place. Learning outcomes are difficult to predict and often, what seem like obvious interventions, do not produce expected outcomes. Sometimes it is small changes that produce unexpected major results.

Senge's (1993) concept of organisational learning comprised: *Personal mastery*, which is a process of developing and acting on personal visions; *Mental models* of how we see the world and act according to our views; *Building shared vision* where people excel and learn, not because they are told to but because they want to; and *Systems thinking*, which views all events as connected in time and space. Each of these components has an influence on the others. Some of these influences can be very subtle. In my experience, this view of an organisation as a whole, with all parts interacting, is not a common way of looking at learning or team building in organisations. More often, the various components are seen in isolation.

An essential part of the learning process involves providing the opportunity for learning to be put into practice to give it meaning and contextualisation. Conceptual learning is not enough. First-hand experience is often the best way to learn; however, as Senge (1993) believed, people never directly experience the consequences of many of their most important decisions because cause and effect occur in complex systems, which separate them in time and space. For example, when a decision is made to undertake a particular form of study, the impact and consequences of that decision for the student are not always known until after the final

work is completed and the graduate is looking for work.

Tzeng (1991) pointed out that people learn in many different ways and have specific preferences for taking in information and assessing preferences for processing that information. People tend to remember only the content that captures their attention and interest no matter how it is taught. They learn most rapidly when they have a genuine sense of responsibility for their actions (Myers-Briggs, 1983). Herrmann (1993) agreed that preferences for learning particular tasks commonly correlate with competence because people tend to do best what they like best. This does not imply that people cannot learn or act upon those things in which they have no intrinsic interest. Preference can be developed to reasonable levels whether or not the person is attracted to that task. People can be motivated to learn by internal or external factors, such as a change in status, rise in pay or the simple pleasure of being competent in a particular field.

Personality Types and Their Relation to Learning

There are many well-known theories on personality including those of Albert Bandura, John Dollard, Hans Eysenck, Sigmund Freud, John Holland, Neal Miller, William Sheldon, B F Skinner, and Carl Rogers. Many have factors in common as well as variations in how they see personality types. Some considered that while individuals may be born with certain strengths in particular areas of personality and intelligence, they are affected by environmental and social experiences (Deaux, 1995; Eysenck, 1956; Furnham & Henderson, 1982; Gardner, 1983; Herrmann, 1993; and Schratz & Walker, 1994). Avery (1990) outlined Jung's (1923) eight basic personality types, which he saw as being flexible enough to allow many combinations of function and attitude.

...every individual possesses both a mechanism of introversion and that of extroversion and it is only the relative strength of the one as compared with the other which creates a type. This quite naturally leads to the dominance of one of the mechanisms.

Jung (1923) in Avery (1990)

Many of these views place a positivist image onto people's personalities and do not allow for movement of interpretation and action according to individual circumstances. While these theories on personality may be useful when seen in a broad light of understanding people's behaviour, they may not be constructive if they are seen as the only way to view people.

Myers-Briggs (1962) personality types and the D.I.S.C. model provide an approach for understanding differences in learning styles and responses to teaching methods. They allow for the consideration of preferences in learning styles, catering, as they do, to different ways of learning and responding to stimuli. When facilitators are aware of these differences and preferences, they can consciously cater for them. In the D.I.S.C. approach, 'Direct' types want to move directly to find answers to issues; 'Influencers' learn best from interactive learning; 'Stabilisers' like to take things more slowly; and the 'Conscientious' prefer organised learning experiences.

When these differences are seen as resources for learning, the learning environment is enriched; learners become more confident in their own learning styles and abilities and are more likely to put new knowledge into practice. Herrmann (1993) believes that a teaching and learning climate where differences are celebrated provides the best foundation for growth.

Kolb (1991) described four ways that people learn: through "reflective observation," understanding the meaning of ideas and situations by

carefully observing and impartially describing them; “abstract conceptualisation” using thinking, logic, ideas and concepts as opposed to feelings; “active experimentation” which is practical rather than reflective; and “concrete experience” which emphasises present realities.

Critical and Reflective Thinking

The literature on critical and reflective thinking is reflective in itself and goes back at least as far as Socrates, who is cited in Williams (1985) as stating that the good life must have reflection as part of its goodness and that the unexamined life is not worth living.

A vital component of learning in workplace situations is the ability to reflect on experiences, to think critically, not in the destructive sense, but with discrimination. This can allow the critical thinker to actively seek and create alternatives and discover more productive ways of working. It creates an ability to reflect, to think about doing something while doing it. The practice of critical thinking is time consuming and involves the thinker in the use of much mental and emotional energy. It requires openness rather than a set of skills and practices or personal qualities. It involves willingness to suspend certainty, to share thinking and be susceptible to having thinking influenced by others. In the process of shared reflection, people hold up their behaviour for scrutiny, and in their interpretation of actions they are given a reflection of their own actions from an unfamiliar psychological vantage point (Brookfield, 1988).

Schoen (1991) and others, including Brookfield (1988) and Ruggiero (1994) pointed out that this involves continuously asking appropriate questions about what to reflect on, how to observe what is going on, how thorough to

be, and what and who to involve. Schoen described the process as involving people in reflecting on their own understanding of a subject in order to discover the sense in someone else's practice, while questioning their own. Each person's view is unique to their own reality. Brookfield (1988) described reflective thinking as both a liberating and threatening process involving the questioning of assumptions underlying customary, habitual ways of thinking and acting and then being ready to think and act differently on the basis of critical thinking.

Critical thinking about work practices is more likely to be effective if that practice takes place within the work group (Senge, 1993). Each setting is unique and so requires an understanding of the many things that affect it before reflection on it can be of great value. When a group of people who work together consider their situation as a group, their collective thoughts can create a broader, more holistic picture of an actual situation. They can create meaning that is significant to each of them. They can show that they respect and support each other, and any decisions that they reach can be understood by each other back in the workday routine setting. The National Framework of Adult English Language, Literacy and Numeracy Competence report (1994) pointed to the importance of collaborative competence as being the highest order of learning, beyond assisted and independent competence.

Senge (1993) pointed out that dynamic activity arises from individuals understanding how they contribute to their own problems. Many people are unaware that they avoid thinking critically about workplace experiences. This may be because, as Brookfield (1988) maintained, the process is often anxiety producing because it challenges previously accepted values, ideas and behaviours. He believes that it is not at all uncommon for people to

stumble on a surprising insight regarding their own capacity for self-deception, or to come to a sudden realisation of how they have been unthinkingly following behavioural and moral norms defined for them by someone else. Gardner (1993), on the other hand, saw this from an ontological perspective. He asserted that individuals continually try to decode (rather than encode) the nature of their world and their interactions with others. He saw this as an unconscious process, and as a result, the learning that could come from it to make changes to actions and behaviour often fails to materialise. Reflection does not end with the thinking and analysing process. It needs to have an end in mind. Baron (1987), Schoen (1991), and Smith (1991) considered that the goal of critical thinking was to be practical and have belief or action as its goal. Ruggiero (1984) called this "futurespection." Neither is there a clear beginning. Baron (1987) and Brookfield (1988) described it as a dynamic process, comprising an indefinite cycle of identification, diagnosis, exploration, action, evaluation, comprehension and application. Brookfield (1988) considered it to be a continual process of creating and re-creating an individual's personal, work and political lives. Outcomes of critical thinking may not always be immediately obvious. Important insights may occur long after a session on critical thinking, and yet realisations may be directly connected to earlier participation in those activities.

External facilitators are often used as catalysts to prompt reflective thinking in a workplace. Those who facilitate this process have a responsibility to be aware of the potentially sensitive nature of the reflective thinking process. The self-esteem of people when questioning their own foundations of understanding can be fragile and requires that the facilitator be highly skilled and ethical. People who are beginning to think critically frequently need sensitive listening and support.

Facilitators can model openness and critical analysis and affirm and encourage critical thinkers' sense of self-worth by respecting and valuing them for themselves and providing a positive structure and support for the development of new ideas. Brookfield (1988) asserted that facilitators can assist people to develop goals that are specific, realistic and in keeping with their own values. A skilled facilitator can help participants to discover what they already understand and to break out of restrictive frameworks of interpretation (Schoen, 1991). There is no standard model for facilitating critical thinking. One of the most difficult tasks facilitators have is to help people recognise when they are thinking critically and convince them of the worth of the process of taking time to stop and think about their thoughts, critically analyse them and describe them. When this is achieved, the process is profoundly educational (Brookfield, 1988).

The Value of Reflection as Part of the Research Process

A component of critical thinking relevant to this study was the researcher's use of reflective thinking in developing the theories that emerged. As Schoen (1991) pointed out, research is a reflective practice in its own right, posing a set of questions - in some instances, dilemmas - that researchers avoid at their own peril. Because of the nature of this research and its close link with facilitation and the effects on participants, there were many components of the research that required an in-depth review and reflection on the part of the facilitator/researcher. These included ethical considerations of both the facilitation and the research on participants, individually and as a group; personal impacts on participants; delving into people's beliefs about themselves and their workplace relationships; confidentiality and the nature of the power relations between the facilitator/researcher and the participants.

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

Personal Development - Understanding Ourselves and Others in the Workplace

A significant component of the reflective process (in a workplace) is the consideration of personal perspectives and relationships. Gardner (1993) believed that facilitation of personal knowledge is an important part of learning because, if individuals do not understand their own feelings, they are less likely to be able to address them. He also commented that the less individuals understand or care about the feelings, responses and behaviour of others, the more likely they will be to interact inappropriately with them. Gardner contended that if individuals are to engage in seriously planning their lives and positively affecting the lives of others, it is necessary for them to develop a mature sense of themselves and an understanding and concern for the needs (behaviour, motivations and feelings) of others. When people can reflect on the reasons for their own and other people's behaviours, they have the opportunity to communicate more honestly and openly with one another. Senge (1998) added that causes of behaviour lie not only within individuals. They are embedded within the structure.

Senge (1993) considered that there was a natural connection between a person's work life and all other aspects of their lives. This connection could only be fully developed and understood through an understanding of the self. Socrates (in Conform, 1974) considered the increase of self-knowledge which implied the recognition of one's true self, to be the only thing worth caring for. Batson (1995) and Ruggiero (1984) also believed that this state could be achieved only through self-examination.

Socrates also believed that knowledge was the condition of a free and noble character, and that “ignorance left a man (*sic*) no better than a slave” (in Conform, 1974, p30). When this is translated into the understanding people have of each other in a workplace, it provides a strong case for the development of a level of personal understanding leading to constructive working relationships and the development of what Senge (1993) called “learning organisations”. Brookfield (1988) asserted that for any effective communication to take place between people, there must be a readiness in those involved to try to understand each other’s perspectives. However, it is important to understand that no one will ever understand enough of the invisible parts of another person (or, indeed, themselves) to be able to make an absolute judgement about their behaviour.

Personal histories and experiences provide people with the means by which they can address their present and future. By re-considering the past, it may be possible to act to change the present and future (Schratz & Walker, 1994). The actions people take depend on the constructions they hold of their world (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). Cultural conditioning also affects people’s expectations of each other and themselves (Brookfield, 1988), influencing how they act and react. Gardner (1983) considered that the culture within which a person functions determines the extent to which the individual peers inwards and gazes outward to others.

The effect of people discovering previously unrecognised aspects of themselves is influenced by how much they already know and believe about themselves, as well as the quality of the feedback they receive. Eisenstadt and Lappe (1994) argued that people have more than one

schematic representation of who they are. They also have representations of “possible selves” that include ideals of what they would like to become, fears of what they might become and notions of what they could become.

Senge (1993) considered embarking on any path of personal growth to be a matter of choice. Organisations can get into considerable difficulty if they become too aggressive in promoting personal mastery for their members. Yet, many organisations conduct compulsory internal personal growth programs.

(Human) solutions for the future can be sought nowhere else but within ourselves. What is needed is for all of us to learn how to stir up our dormant potential and use it purposefully and intelligently.

Club of Rome in Gardner, 1993, p369

Personal Development, Personalities, Personality Types, Multiple Intelligence and Brain Dominance - The Links

Another link that evolved throughout this study was the connection between personalities, personality types, and test situations in which personal styles of behaviour are assessed. This, in turn, linked with how learning outcomes can be affected by individual multiple intelligences and brain dominance. Gardner (1982), Herrmann (1993), and Myers-Briggs (1983) shared the opinion that individuals learn and behave in specific ways according to certain personal characteristics - multiple intelligences (particularly interpersonal³ and intrapersonal⁴ intelligence); brain dominance⁵; and personality, respectively. Gardner addressed his theories

³ The ability to understand other people

⁴ The capacity to form an accurate, veridical model of oneself and be able to use that model to operate effectively in life.

⁵ Described by Hermann (1993) as “each brain hemisphere [having] a specialised function of its own.”

from a cognitive perspective, Herrmann from a brain dominance perspective, and Myers-Briggs from a personality/behaviour perspective.

Personality was seen by Schratz and Walker (1995) as one of the components that affect learning. They described personality as “those aspects of the self that are socially constructed” (p72). Herrmann’s (1993) extensive work on the ways people think and act resulted in his assertions on the theory of brain dominance, which categorised the brain into specialised areas for particular types of thinking, which were affected by personal experiences. This, he asserted, was expressed through people’s preferred modes of learning, understanding and expressing themselves. Gardner (1983) believed that “the kind of perception and judgement people naturally prefer determines the direction in which they can develop most fully and effectively and with most personal satisfaction” (p201).

Myers-Briggs (1972) developed Jung’s classification into sixteen types. The D.I.S.C. model uses four. Cattell (1977) delineated eighteen “main personality factors”, each with a positive and negative aspect and Bolton (1985) described John Holland’s six personality categories. Gallen (in Eysenck, 1956) considered that there were many personality types which he saw could not be combined in any way.

Jung (1923) (in Myers-Briggs, 1983) argued that, to be useful, a personality theory must portray and explain people as they are in order to enhance self-understanding of attitudes, values, and unconscious mental processes. He saw this as a foundation from which to develop perception and judgement as a basis for communication and decision making. Cohen (1988) and Myers-Briggs (1983) asserted that these individual differences influence how people relate to each other. Myers-Briggs (1983) believed that identifying

and remembering people's types is a mark of respect, not only for their right to behave in ways of their own choosing, but also for the concrete ways in which they are and prefer to be different from others.

Gardner (1993) and Myers-Briggs (1983) asserted that people with different personalities differ in their interests, values and needs, learn in different ways, and have different ambitions and responses to different rewards. Avery (1990) considered individual differences in behaviour to be relatively consistent and stable in similar situations. Gardner (1983) commented that intelligences are always negotiated within the context of the current array of fields and disciplines represented in society. Again, these are positivist points of view that do not allow for the many individual variances that affect the way that people behave and learn.

The factors that affect a person's behaviour may result from a variety of influences, which I have described in the following diagram (Figure 2.5).



Figure 2.5
My Assessment of Influences on Behaviour

The D.I.S.C. exercise emphasises empathic ways of seeing the differences of others and recognising that each person has the potential to contribute to the group. When there is a basis of understanding of differences, effective relationships are possible and disagreements can be less irritating. Consideration is given to different ways of approaching others, and there is a recognition of the need to supplement natural or comfortable patterns of behaviour by consulting with others and seeking to broaden repertoires of behaviour. The D.I.S.C. externalises people's perceptions of themselves and others. It does not give a complete picture of a person.

Personality types (or reactions to situations) are not fixed. While individuals may be born with certain strengths in particular areas of personality and intelligence, these are affected by environmental experiences. Cohen (1988), Gardner (1983), Herrmann (1993), Jung (1923), and Myers-Briggs (1983) all considered that individuals possess certain core traits or abilities in intelligence and/or personalities, which they blend with styles of behaviour. Jung (1923) (in Eysenck, 1956) considered that people create their type through the exercise of their individual preferences regarding perception and judgement, which produces a recognisable set of traits and potentialities.

Myers-Briggs (1983) claimed that many problems might be dealt with more successfully if they were to be approached in the light of Jung's theory of psychological types. The MBTI⁶, which she developed, enables participants to understand and manage specific personality differences in a constructive way. Brookfield (1988) considered that realisation of the way people's behaviour is perceived by others to constitute a crucial first stage in being able to unravel the complexities of conflicts and other destructive

⁶ Myers-Briggs Type Personality Inventory

misunderstandings. In conflicts, people are often fixed in one position and, by remaining fixed, they cannot see other possibilities. When they can utilise empathic behaviour, the situation has the possibility to be resolved. Senge (1993) stated that:

If I can look out through your view and you through mine, we will each see something we might not have seen alone (p248).

Participants in personality type exercises usually display greater approval for some typical behaviours than others. The empathy displayed usually relates to those with similar types of behaviour. These behaviours seem desirable and comfortable because they contain values and judgements that appear natural and familiar. Types that behave quite differently, reflecting different strengths and values, may not seem as desirable.

These theories have implications for the process of facilitation as part of team building in a workplace. Facilitation, to be most effective, needs to take into account the distinct ways that participants learn.

Searching for meaning through defining personality types and characteristics has been going on for many centuries (Eysenck, 1956). My research involved appraising the effect of using one method of assessing personality types, through the use of the personal inventory D.I.S.C. exercise. This model introduces four distinct personality types, outlining particular behaviours for each type.

D.I.S.C. PERSONALITY TYPES

Conscientious	Direct
Stabiliser	Influencer

Figure 2.6

D.I.S.C Model of Personality Types (Conflict Resolution Network ,1989)

The exercise was taken from the CRN'S program, developed in 1989⁷. Participants are given the opportunity to understand their own and others' personality types as defined originally by Jung in 1928 (in Avery, 1990), redefined by Myers-Briggs (1968) and modified for this exercise. When used in a workplace, it considers how people work together, their needs in relation to their type and how they can relate to each other from a more informed position. Exercises are used to help participants empathically examine their own personalities and behaviours and those of others. Personal power of the participants is an important consideration in this exercise. Participants are encouraged to critically challenge the exercise, and the issue of stereotyping is addressed.

There are many different perspectives on the value or otherwise of using personality type instruments. Cohen (1988), in commenting on Myers-Briggs personality inventory types, said that these types are not lifetime boxes. The differences can be seen as useful complements to one another if understood and appreciated. Eysenck (1956) considered that the task of classification in psychology brings some order into the various activities practised by human beings. Tzeng (1991), on the other hand, stated that

⁷ The Conflict Resolution Network organisation was set up in Sydney, partly to train people in conflict resolution, and this exercise is taken from the section of the course related to empathy.

there is little evidence for the construct validity of tests of Myers-Briggs Type Inventory scales. People have specific preferences for perceiving (taking in information) the world and judging preferences for processing the information.

The Possible Risks of Using Personality Type Measurements

There are risks in using personality type measurements. People may become stereotyped and be locked into a particular type of behaviour.

Therefore, when participants take part in these exercises, it is necessary for them to be given as much information as possible in order to assess the benefits and the disadvantages of participating. With this information, they have the opportunity to weigh the possible harmful aspects against expected gains. Dahlstrom (1973) commented that the administration of instruments needs to be introduced by a frank statement about the purpose and possible outcomes of the testing. The fact that there are no right or wrong answers and that the subject's own opinions are being solicited must also be conveyed. Based on these considerations, participants will have more opportunity to make informed decisions regarding the level of their participation.

Measurements of personality type, brain dominance or intelligences will provide a transient image of preferences at any one moment. Characteristics are not fixed, nor do they measure competence, or other important factors such as strength of character, personal loyalty, effectiveness under pressure, or motivation to grow and change (Herrmann, 1993). A given profile is neither good nor bad, right nor wrong. With all of these limitations to personality profiles, they are useful in providing a framework from which

to function to provide a range of approaches that suit different people at different times. They do not have to be fixed so that there is no room for movement or so that intolerance develops.

People behave differently, depending on circumstances, past experiences, responses of others and perceived expectations. Responses to situations or the actions of others are not necessarily meaningful outside the specific time and place in which they occur (Avery, 1990). Any mode of knowing, if situationally applied, can be more useful than the others (Herrmann, 1993). When people work together closely, they learn how to vary their behaviour according to the contexts (Brookfield, 1988) and the personalities of those involved. When personality type classification experiences are introduced into workplaces, it is vital that participants be helped to become aware of these many influences on behaviour.

Self-reporting personality inventories, such as the D.I.S.C., cannot be completely free from manipulation. People involved in these exercises may use conscious or unconscious distortion to portray socially desirable and positive images. People reveal only certain parts of themselves in the presence of others for many reasons. Avery (1990), Cialdini (1993), Deaux (1995), and Tracey (1994) all asserted that the deception is often a mechanism for self-preservation and avoiding disapproval. Eysenck (1956) and Ruggiero (1984) argued that responses relate to the urge to conform. Olsen and Johnson (1991) referred to the phenomenon as "impression management". Helmes (1986) considered that people do not deliberately manipulate in these situations. They were merely seeking approval. He believed also that not all people are affected to the same extent by external impressions of their audience.

WORK GROUPS WITHIN A SYSTEM

The Dynamics of People Working Together

Neither individuals nor working groups operate in isolation, consequently, this study attempted to understand the ways that systems interact with individual behaviour, behaviour management and organisational culture in their effect on formal learning and team development.

Due consideration needs be given to factors outside the immediate group to determine how work groups function together and how the complexities surrounding them affect their interactions. It can highlight the key influences on group development and cohesion. Each work group is affected in different ways by external as well as internal influences: without awareness of the issues involved, it is difficult for the members of the group to address them.

There is a great deal written about 'teams', how they work best together and what makes a productive 'team'. Most authors describe teams as distinct groups of people who work together (Clark 1991; Herrmann, 1993; Jackall, 1988; Katzenbach, 1993; and Senge, 1993). 'Teams' are not fixed entities. They are moving and changing groups of people who are influenced continuously by endogenous and exogenous forces whether they be personal, organisational, environmental or situational. This does not mean that a group of people who work together cannot successfully undergo developmental processes (such as formal learning) in rebuilding themselves into a more cohesive group, if that is the desired outcome.

Systems Theory and its Place in Facilitation of Team Building

Senge's (1993) perception of organisational systems was based on the concept that an organisation is made up of groups, which are integral parts of the whole system, invariably modifying each other's actions and ultimately impacting on how the work group operates. Each individual personality, behaviour and action has an effect on how the group functions. Added to this is the influence of external organisations and individuals who interact with a work group, creating an extremely complex situation. All events are connected in time and space. Each has an influence on the rest often in a very subtle way (Cohen, 1988 and Senge, 1993). Schratz and Walker (1995) believe that it is difficult to address the connection between individual and social structures that affect working groups without acknowledging the underlying structures, such as board and management decisions, union involvement, customer expectations, community expectations and the cultural climate of the organisation.

The separate and overlapping systems that make up an organisation are each engaged with managing their own boundaries with other systems. Trist (1991) delineated three distinct but highly interrelated sub-systems in workplaces: the formal social system, the informal social system and the technical system (as shown in Figure 2.7). A change in one of these sub-systems can have major implications in the other two. This is often not taken into account when work groups are changed in some way, especially in relation to the impact on the informal social system.

The socio technical system

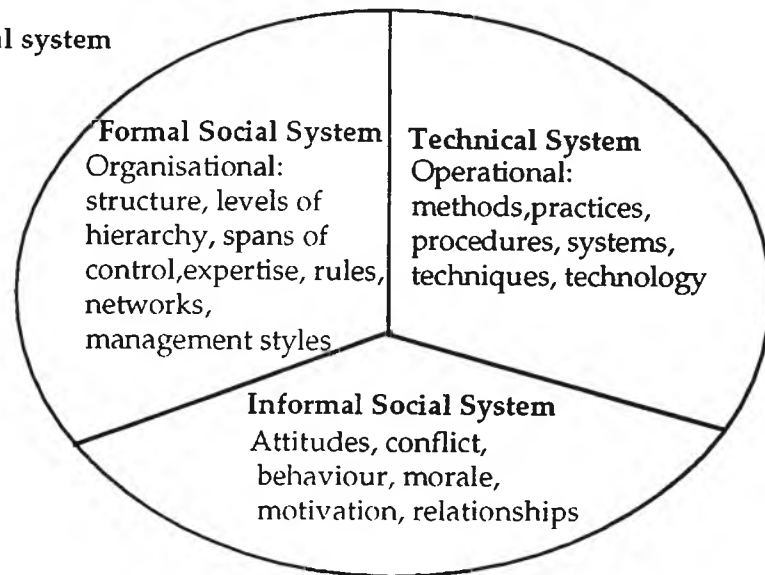


Figure 2.7
The Socio Technical System (Trist, 1991)

For progress to occur within a work group, it is necessary for human relations to have developed enough to allow for members to feel a sense of community and be able to utilise their intrapersonal intelligence (Cohen, 1988; Gardner, 1993). People must be able to speak to one another, to agree, to disagree, to interact as peers, to have relationships as equals. They need to have a common concept and language. The structure of the team, its level of communication and leadership are closely related to how it functions (Myers-Briggs, 1989).

Part of an organisation's ability to survive depends on its ability to continually adjust in response to the environment (Clark, 1991). In many situations, when problems arise, the solutions can impose more uncertainty and pressure on an already overloaded system. If an organisation is to find answers to address complex problems in an ongoing manner, it is essential that it view the system as a whole and all those involved as active participants who have a role to play in changes that may occur. When solutions are merely shifted from one part of the system to another, they can take on a different aspect of the problem in another place. There cannot

be a single, correct solution to dealing with complexity. Actions need to be understood as extending beyond the boundaries of one position to seeing them as part of the larger system.

To create a learning organisation involves the practice of dialogue, suspension of assumptions, and thinking together on an ongoing, regular basis. Shared visions within an organisation create a sense of common caring through a feeling of commonality, connectedness and commitment (Senge, 1993). However, even when people share a common vision, they may have many different ideas about how to achieve that vision.

Effective teams are not characterised by an absence of conflict (Senge, 1993). In effective teams, a measure of meaningful conflict can be highly productive. One of the most reliable indicators of a team that is continually learning is the exchange of ideas through constructive argument which becomes part of the ongoing dialogue as participants (inter-dependently) influence each other. It involves people working together, thinking and interacting with each other as colleagues with differing views, rather than as adversaries. It is undermined whenever respect for one another and for each other's view is lost (Senge, 1993). The purpose of group learning is to develop strategies for looking at the larger picture that lies beyond individual perspective. Only if some kind of community can emerge is there any chance that implementation of strategies will take hold (Gardner, 1993). Working groups need to learn how to recognise the patterns of interaction that undermine learning.

Avery (1990) asserted that cohesiveness and group size are important variables of team viability. The larger the size, the less participation in the group, and "social loafing" (when some members of the group remain

uninvolved and rely on others to participate) may occur (Latane, in Avery, 1990, p216) due to a lack of identifiability or belief about what other people will do. Group size is only one of the factors affecting participation. Distinctive leadership or management styles also play a part in how participants engage with the group. Levels of interaction may also originate from particular personality influences within the group. The culture of the organisation can also encourage or discourage active participation in group decision making and worker empowerment.

Work groups that are developed to think in particular ways can create the phenomenon of what Latane referred to (in Avery, 1990, p216) terms “groupthink” (a term originally coined by Janis). This type of thinking can create an illusion of unanimity because group members who might provide critical insight do not say what they think through fear that their initiative might be rejected by the rest of the team. This often occurs in highly cohesive groups. Members of these groups shield themselves from outside information that might undermine their decisions. This process can produce “mindguards” (Latane, in Avery, 1990, p216) and the “self censorship” (Latane, in Avery, 1990, p216) of dissenting ideas. When this occurs, it may support a high level of morale and internal creativity while ignoring outside guidance or wisdom.

As work groups develop norms of behaviour, members who behave within those norms may feel a closer affinity with the group than those members who are prepared to examine alternatives. When a minority of members of a work group behave in different ways to the norm, they are often rejected by the rest of the group, no matter how valid or constructive their thinking might be. The ‘normal’ situation is a comparative concept, usually defined in terms of culture.

Learning as a Tool for Change in a Workplace

To change the world we need to understand it, but we can only understand it when we seek to change it.

Schratz and Walker, 1995

Change in behaviour results in either accelerating growth or accelerating decline

Senge, 1993

When formal learning is included as part of a holistic approach to team building, it may be a catalyst for change. Change is a non-linear, continuously ongoing process. It can be a planned process or a spontaneous reaction that sets up chain reactions (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Changing practice is not an event (Clarke, 1991), nor is it an easy thing to do. It takes time; much longer than the intellectual recognition of a problem.

Change may be resisted because it involves a movement away from traditional ways of doing things and can challenge the established power relationships in an organisation. "The capacity of any ruling class to give up power voluntarily is not one to instil hope in the powerless" (Senge, 1993). In some cases, it is not in the interests of organisations or management to encourage change because the organisation would have the most to lose if things really did change. Hence, key people in organisations often react against facilitators who try to shift the status quo (Clark, 1991), even though that is precisely what has been requested of the facilitator.

An individual's capacity to accept change depends partly on how it is managed (Trist, 1991) and how acceptable it is (Senge, 1993). If changes are to be accepted, they must be non-threatening and sustainable. They need to involve the entire workforce in ongoing consultation in decision making to

determine the direction of change. Changes are often made in workplaces without prior dialogue with those affected by the changes, or too many changes are made without due consideration of their effect on the workforce.

Change in a workplace occurs in a social setting, not in isolation by individuals. The very fact that one person changes affects the dynamics of the whole group and facilitates further change. This could have the potential to create a sense of imbalance in relationship (Schratz & Walker, 1995) and may mean that relationships need to be reconstructed in order for new strategies to be effected. Part of the process of accepting change lies in the appreciation and utilisation of individual differences, which Herrmann (1993) claimed could make people more creative in finding positive outcomes.

RESEARCH

The Researcher's Role in Constructivist Inquiry

Throughout this study, I was aware of the role of the facilitator/researcher in team development. Key qualitative researchers such as Broeschke (1988), Chandler (1992), Guba and Lincoln (1989), Schoen (1991), Schratz and Walker (1995), Smith (1991), and Strauss and Corbin (1985, 1989) commented upon the ways in which the researcher, the research, the theory and the participants closely influence each other. They are also concerned with the validity of using qualitative methods in a constructivist inquiry. They stress the relevance of data collected from participants and the meaning those participants place on analysis and findings. Strauss and

Corbin (1989) pointed out that this interaction creates the data that emerge from the inquiry and will influence how the data are interpreted. Each of these authors agree that the social researcher is an intrinsic part of the research and its results, all affecting and being affected by the process or (as a 'relatively' famous person once said), "Our theories determine what we measure" (Einstein, in Senge, 1993).

Schratz and Walker (1995) point out that social scientists have traditionally concentrated on looking at human action from a distance rather than close up. "Social inquiry," as described by Smith (1991), is a collaborative, cooperative process between individuals and groups, the researcher and the researched. In this method of research, the researcher becomes an intrinsic part of the research.

Schratz and Walker (1995) also asserted that one way of relating social theories to the world of human interactions is to see researchers included in (rather than outside) the body of their own research. This is particularly relevant to the situation of the facilitator/researcher who is influencing actions in a dual role. Schoen (1991) saw the researcher as an "agent experient" rather than a spectator-manipulator. He states further that research itself is a reflective practice in its own right, posing a set of questions (in some instances, dilemmas) that researchers avoid at their own peril. For example, if researchers are not aware of their own influence on the research, they might reach conclusions that are not in accord with the participants.

These views challenge the myth of the researcher as an objective observer of the research who can view the experiences with detachment and distance. In a positivist model of absolute knowledge, detachment was seen

as the only valid way to conduct qualitative research, in the belief that participants would not be influenced by the activities of the researcher or the research itself. This is not possible. The mere fact that the research is being carried out and that the researcher is present influences research findings.

I was reminded by Chandler's work (1992) of the importance of keeping the big picture in mind and not getting lost in minute details, which can occur when conducting qualitative research (in an inquiry method) where large amounts of time are spent with participants on a day-to-day basis.

Values in Qualitative Research and The Links with Formal learning

Guba and Lincoln (1989), Schratz and Walker (1995), and Soltis (1990) pointed out that qualitative research and its findings cannot be value-free. It is influenced by cultural factors (Brookfield, 1988), which are an intrinsic part of the inquiry process and provide the basis for attributing meaning. Methodologies that claim to be value-free will probably have little utility (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). The researcher's personal experience and knowledge, which have created their values, influence how they conduct both research and formal learning and how they interpret the findings.

Broeschke (1992) and Schratz and Walker (1995) reflected that there are many truths in social inquiry that are a matter of consensus among informed and sophisticated constructors. Senge (1993) asserted that all we ever have to work with are assumptions, never truths; we always see the world through mental models, and these are always incomplete. This indicates the invalidity of researchers' claims that their findings are a truth because research is, itself, socially located and always needs to be reflexive, to

be about itself as well as about its focus of concern (to look inwards as well as outwards).

ETHICS

The findings of social research and the closeness that the researcher/facilitator shares with participants makes it necessary to carefully consider the ethical situations that arise, particularly in relation to their potential impact on individuals and the systems in which they are involved. The philosophy of ethics is concerned with how one acts towards others and how relationships are formed (Smith, 1992). There has been a great deal written about the ethics of research and facilitation. Codes of ethics have been developed for facilitators (Clark, 1991) and researchers (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). However, little has been written that links the two together. This is unfortunate because many of the issues raised in these two disciplines are similar. A major objective of this research is to address these links.

The Ethics Involved in Social Inquiry and Facilitation in a Workplace

Within the model of research undertaken in this study, as Smith (1992) pointed out, the researcher's knowledge "is not superior to, nor can be judgemental of knowledge of others" (p106). Guba and Lincoln (1989) asserted that researchers and participants must operate from positions of equal power and the same, relevant information. This is difficult to achieve because firstly, they do not have the same information, and the relevant information they do have is perceived differently by each. Participants usually view the researcher as having more expertise and

knowledge, and knowledge is often power. Also, the facilitator may have more opportunity to spend time reflecting on situations, an opportunity that is not often available to participants. Time for reflective thinking in most workplaces is rare.

It is the role of the researcher in qualitative research using a constructivist, emergent design to involve participants in every aspect of design, implementation, interpretation and resulting action of an inquiry. Each member's views and values are of equal relevance (Clark, 1991). The researcher/facilitator must respect the individual participant's dignity and integrity (Smith, 1991). Tom (1984) wrote of the need for concern for those conducting research to clearly define for themselves, their own "rightness of conduct" and what is important or valuable.

Qualitative inquiry depends upon using others as a means to the researcher's ends, to produce knowledge or improve practice. However, participants must be seen as ends in themselves and not only as a means to the researcher's ends. Qualitative researchers must have compassion for others (Soltis, in Eisner & Peshkin, 1990). They must also have a highly developed social conscience regarding confidentiality, privacy, avoidance of deception, and contractual obligations. Facilitators/researchers must also be aware of their own motives for their actions. They must be receptive to sensitive issues in the conduct of the research (Soltis, in Eisner & Peshkin, 1990). They have an obligation to participants to make every effort to protect them from harm or violation of rights that have a potential to occur in the process of research and formal learning (Lincoln, 1990).

Clark (1991) and Guba and Lincoln (1989) asserted that participants are entitled to be part of the process of informed consent, so that they have a

clear understanding about what information is to be provided, where it is likely to go, who will receive feedback and the level of confidentiality the researcher can offer. Guba and Lincoln (1989) added that there needs to be an awareness of the effect of possible negative findings that may create problems beyond the research, including loss of dignity loss of individual autonomy or self-esteem, not to mention loss of job.

Face-to-face contact in research of this nature consists of intensive, fragile relationships which may be subject to violation of trust, and misunderstandings regarding the purposes or relationships with other respondents. Soltis (1990) pointed out some specific ethical dilemmas of paternalism, manipulation and control of participants by a facilitator.

These extensive requirements of ethical behaviour may be intellectually understood by researchers and yet, as Andresen (1996) and Soltis (1990) pointed out, merely knowing what ethics involves does not make the researcher/facilitator ethical or able to solve ethical problems. There is, however, more likelihood that ethical violations will be minimised if a facilitator's (and researcher's) behaviour is based on care, respect and regard for participants (Johnson, 1975).

Ethical Issues as a Key Feature in Personal Development Facilitation in a Workplace

Organising and conducting courses in personal development facilitation in an experiential mode in workplaces raises many ethical issues that are similar to those of the research process. Thompson and McHugh (1990) show concern that the role of staff 'development', while ostensibly meeting 'training needs', is instead placing the responsibility for organisational

problems on the individual rather than the system.

In facilitation, there is also a need to consider the relevance and purpose of the content. Socrates' philosophy that [our] "chief and proper concern is knowledge of [ourselves] and of the right way to live" (in Conform, 1974, p31) forms a framework in which to place these considerations. He concluded that the key was to keep talking and asking questions.

Facilitators and researchers need constantly to question the freedom and privileges they enjoy due to their position, the temptations associated with these freedoms and the mistakes that may occur as a consequence. This is particularly important when facilitation and research are of a personal nature, where feelings and emotions may be vulnerable. Participants at the Australian Consortium of Experiential Education (ACEE) 1995 conference in a workshop led by Nelson concluded that appropriate matters on which to reflect include: consequences of facilitation (and research); assumptions that are often made about participants and circumstances; knowledge of facilitation concepts; knowledge of participants; personal and professional judgements; timing; levels of participation; participants' emotions and possible implications; values and beliefs; and cultural awareness.

Boud, at the same conference, suggested that ethics in facilitation can be defined as a professional way of congruently ordering values to serve both the facilitator and the learner within the group setting. Andresen (at the ACEE Conference, 1995) referred to "the ethical territory of training." Clark (1991) added the considerations of dealing with conflicting interests to a code of ethics for facilitators. Other concerns of social research and facilitation include: the partiality of facilitators to certain people, the integrity of the facilitator/researcher, the ability of the facilitator/researcher to compromise on a stance, the preparation of materials and the

environment, and the power status of participants. Tom (1984) believed that the morality involved in facilitation in workplaces, which is usually sanctioned by an institution, is commonly based around the inherent inequality of relationships between facilitator and learner.

It is the responsibility of facilitators and researchers to apply a code of ethics to themselves and use good judgement in what they do. They need to be aware of their personal agenda of power, influence, affection and respect. Facilitators have control over developing learner directions by their selection and presentation of materials. The attempt to teach another person involves the responsibility to work in harmony with that person's best interests and needs. In the facilitation of learning, particularly in personality type exercises, one can fall into the trap of responding to people as types rather than individuals.

Other issues that can arise include: confidentiality, dealing with unexpected deeper emotional issues that can be brought to the surface by specific triggers in the learning event, and leaving people without a sense of emotional closure. The question of the facilitator's responsibility for how participants use their learning after the event is also a matter for consideration, although there is not a great deal that the facilitator can do about this.

There is often an imbalance between facilitators and learners in which facilitators confer knowledge onto learners rather than creating a conjoint experience of learning and responsibility (Turbill, 1993). What, in reality, usually occurs is that when a person is ready to learn a particular skill, they will do so, despite the facilitator, not necessarily because of the facilitator. Learners are ultimately responsible for their own learning. Freire (1970, in Tom, 1984) believed that while every aspect of learning involves a moral

component, the extent to which the individual educator can have an effect on the direction of any particular educational endeavour may well be open to question. He talks of the “banking” concept of education in which “knowledge is a gift bestowed by those who consider themselves knowledgeable upon those whom they consider to know nothing” (p58), and he rejects this as good education.

Clark (1991) considered that it was important for the facilitator to consult with all the members of a team. Ideally, the facilitator would have the opportunity to do this prior to the actual learning event. In reality, this opportunity is rarely provided, and the best the facilitator can do is to attempt to gauge personal issues in large or small group situations during facilitation. The facilitators’ intentions and objectives need to be clearly communicated to participants in the early stages of facilitation. Participants need to understand the implications of participating in experiential exercises in which they will be asked to examine their own behaviour and the behaviour of others.

Clark also believed that part of the facilitator’s role was to explain the ground rules of dialogue, guide participants in their use, and encourage team members to raise the most difficult, subtle and conflicting issues essential to the team’s work. For some people, this may be threatening, particularly if they are attending facilitation under pressure of management. They may not want to reveal personal particulars about themselves or participate in particular facilitation exercises. In some instances, it may not be wise for participants to reveal their concerns or raise serious issues in a workplace facilitation situation because of repercussions that could occur. The facilitator needs to be aware and sensitive to these subtleties.

PERSONAL BACKGROUND

During my professional career which I began as an early childhood teacher, and later as a resource teacher in early childhood, following post-graduate studies in Special Education, I conducted and participated in many in-service courses in experiential learning mode. I ran courses in workplaces in stress management and coping with change. As I worked across the country in a national co-ordinating position, I became aware of stresses in other work groups who were receiving little or no support in managing stress or working in teams.

When I became manager of a health promotion team, I introduced in-service courses for staff in personal development and team building. During this time, I attended the professional facilitation course run by the Conflict Resolution Network (CRN). I put this learning into action, leading programs for staff with whom I worked, and others in the local health service. I obtained further skills through CRN in Advanced Conflict Resolution Skills, and in mediation through Relationships Australia (formerly the Marriage Guidance Council of NSW) and Unifam⁸.

My experiences motivated me to start my own consultancy in conflict resolution, communications, and mediation. Since then, I have worked with a wide range of people, in groups, as individuals or as members of work-based teams. This work has taken me into tertiary institutions (working with staff and students), government departments, schools, police, child care centres, councils, health organisations, radio stations, non-government organisations, the corporate sector and community groups.

⁸ The family counselling and mediation service of the Uniting Church.

SUMMARY

In this chapter I have combined the relevant literature in relation to the role of the facilitator/researcher on team building with my role and experience in this field and the current situation in the Child Care Centre.

I have attempted to outline the complexities of facilitation and team building, showing that it is a complex process involving interrelationships of individuals, groups and organisations and is tied by ethical considerations. My experience has indicated that there is no simple, short-term or ideal way to address the process of team development in a workplace.

I have suggested that a 'team' is usually seen as a fixed organism to be worked with in a discrete manner without considering other influences on it. It is, in reality, affected by many internal and external influences, from individuals, groups and structures. These influences also have an effect on any facilitation and research involved in the process of team building. Internal influences include the responsibility taken by participants for their own learning, which must be shared by facilitators and organisations.

I have also pointed out that there are benefits and disadvantages in conducting personal development facilitation as part of team building in a workplace. The fact that these concerns exist does not mean that there should not be facilitation in personal development in workplaces. There is a need for great care and skill in presenting courses and part of the process needs to include consultation with all stakeholders.

I have examined the literature relevant to the value of using personality measures in workplaces, acknowledging that the benefits can be rewarding for those who take part in the exercises. Team members can develop an understanding of behaviours that can lead to the reduction of tension in a workplace. Concerns about possible risks involved in participating in these exercises were also explored. The nature of personal growth through formal learning makes it difficult to assess immediate outcomes which generally take time to be integrated into people's lives.

The literature has indicated that critical thinking is a cornerstone to the improvement of personal and team performance and needs to be an accepted and ongoing part of learning activity in a workplace. It also plays a significant part in the research process in social inquiry.

I have discussed the role that the interconnection between the theories of personality types, multiple intelligences and brain dominance can play in creating functioning teams. How the various influences on behaviour interplay to influence the way that people work together has been discussed.

I have put forward the idea that the process of change takes time, and formal learning facilitation can be used as a catalyst for that change. However, it is only a part of the process, not an end in itself. Through my practice I have found that there are many obstacles, both personal and structural to the process of change in workplaces.

I have examined the literature, in relation to the importance of considering the whole organisation in the process of team building and the need to train working groups together to encourage understanding and support for each other in changes that might occur as a result of formal learning experiences.

To address the issues that confront working groups, it is essential to see the system as a whole, with each part and each individual seen as an integral part of that system. To deal with one issue in isolation ignores the intra-organisational effect of each part on the others.

I have highlighted the importance and relevance of the role of the researcher/facilitator and the connection between this person and the participants. As the literature indicates, the researcher is not an external observer, unaffected by the interaction with participants and interim findings and is part of the process and has an influence on what and how information is collected and analysed.

I contend that ethical issues are the key feature to consider in qualitative research and in facilitation of experiential learning experiences in personal development in a workplace. Many of the issues in both facilitated learning and research are similar and require constant attention.

The complex issues of developing teams through facilitated learning requires a great deal of reflection by all those involved over an extended period of time. The facilitator/researcher plays a most important role in this situation and must be aware of her professional responsibilities in the relationships formed through the research and facilitation. I have found that there are no easy answers, and the outcomes are not immediately obvious. They need to be seen in the light of interrelationships between people and structures, considering formal learning experiences as one part of the change process to develop functioning teams.

In the following chapter, I will set the scene for the remainder of the study, describing the setting in which the study took place.

CHAPTER THREE

BEING THERE

INTRODUCTION

This chapter describes the world in which the study took place and the actions I took within that environment. It sets the scene for the way the study was addressed and analysed, which resulted in the development of a theory on learning and team development.

THE CONTEXT

The Socio-Political Position

The Tailor's Valley Child Care Centre is located in an urban housing area, close to a railway line in an industrial part of a city of approximately 350,000 people. It is a popular Centre in the area and has a capacity enrolment with a long waiting list of children to be placed. The Centre is financed through state and federal funding and is part of a parent group with eight other centres. The local University, College of Technical and Further Education and other organisations involved in early childhood training use the Centre for student placement on a regular basis. A parent committee meets monthly to participate in the running of the Centre. The children, aged between six months and four years, attend from one to five days a week between the hours of 7.30 am. and 6.00 pm. Parents pay fees for their

children to attend. The program run by the staff is planned in detail in relation to child developmental principles. Professional development is an ongoing activity undertaken by all staff.

Documentation Relating to Learning and Development

Courses in learning and development undertaken by staff at the Centre are influenced by a series of policies, practices and perceptions at the individual, local, regional and national levels. Policy documents from the Centre and the parent organisation, and a national child care review document (National Accreditation Program, 1994), were reviewed as part of this study, giving a picture of official views on learning and development and its place in the development of workplace teams. All child care centres in Australia at the time of the research were involved in the National Accreditation Program (1994). This national program, which addresses aspects of Child Care, contains a section on learning and development (Principle 50), which comments on training in relation to child care and development, with no mention of learning and development of personal staff development (see Appendix 8). Principles 14 and 15 of the accreditation document refer to the staff communicating well with each other and showing respect for other members of the team (see Appendices 7 and 7a).

The Centre's philosophy and goals (1995) comment on "providing quality educational care for young children" but do not specifically include staff learning and development as an aspect of that care. Staff members are encouraged to attend staff development courses, which are generally offered at sites away from the Centre. They usually attend these as individuals, not with other staff members. The Centre maintains a list of staff who attend courses.

The parent organisation “encourages and supports staff involvement in in-service training and staff development, both internally and externally” and aims to “promote ongoing training and professional enrichment to all staff” and to this end provides training on a wide range of topics, including team development, for all staff (1991).

The Impetus for this Study

The impetus for my using the Tailor’s Valley Child Care Centre for the focus of my study came from the Director of the Centre. She had previously attended a conflict resolution course for a group of child care centre directors from a parent organisation, which I facilitated. She found it useful for her own learning of the nature of conflicts and how personalities can affect the way conflicts are dealt with in a workplace. The workshop led her to consider the possible introduction of a similar course for the staff at the Centre she directed, and after consulting with staff, she arranged for me to work with the staff in the area of personal development as part of a process of team development.

The People and the Physical Setting

The Centre has two playrooms with a total of forty children. At the time of the study, there were five under-two year olds and twelve two-to-three year olds in one room with three workers. In the other room, there are usually twenty three-to-five year olds with three personal contact staff.

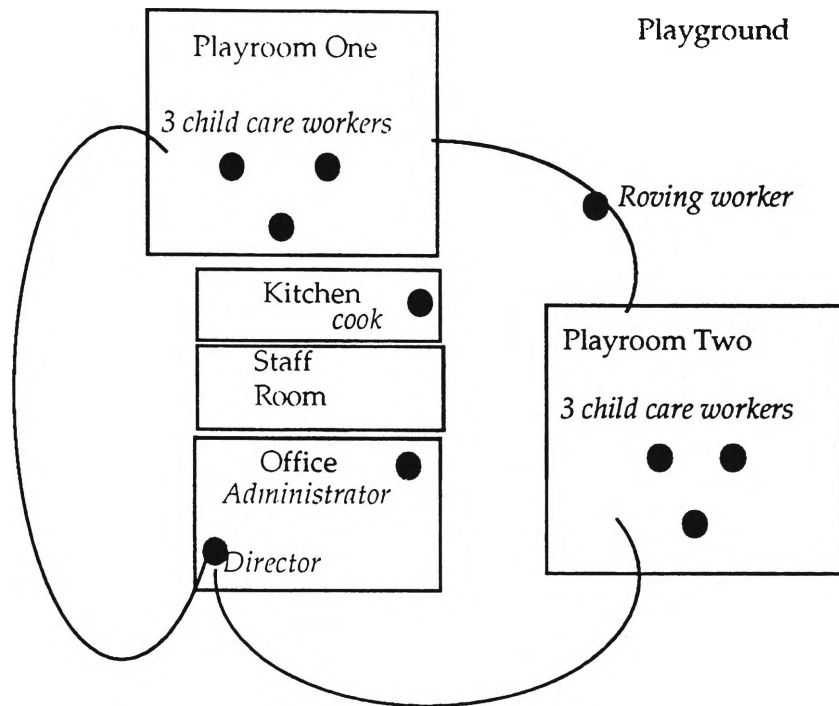


Figure 3.1
Layout of the Child Care Centre and Staff Placement

Staff

The Centre has a teaching Director (the Director discussed in this study left the Centre toward the end of the data collection stage) who manages the Centre and includes some teaching in her duties; a training director (who became the director after I finished collecting the data) who was a qualified teacher, 'apprenticing' for a director's role (a generally accepted practice in this organisation); eight primary contact staff (most with child care qualifications); a cook; a cleaner and a clerical assistant. There were also several casual child care staff who worked at the Centre as required. The staff working directly with the children worked on a rotating roster, in morning or afternoon shifts, beginning at 7.30 am and finishing at 3.00 am, or starting at 10.00 am and finishing at 6.00 pm.

Staff ages ranged from twenty-one to forty-two years (at the time of the data collection), with time of stay in this job ranging from six months to six

years. The youngest has been there for the shortest time and the oldest the longest time. Comments were made during the interviews, undertaken as part of this study, that this age range created a good working balance and the younger staff commented on their reliance on the older staff for advice.

The varying amounts of time the staff had been employed at the Centre also gave the staff a balance between experience and fresh perceptions on the running of the Centre. The varied qualifications, gained from different institutions, also added to the diversity of approaches that contributed to the functioning of the Centre. The demographics of the staff, details of age, length of time at the Centre and qualifications, are detailed in Table 3.1.

Staff at the Centre

Name	Site	Time at Centre	Age	Qualifications*
Belinda**	Playroom one older children	6 months	21 years	AD, NSW
Karla		18 months	24 years	D, NSW
Mandy		22 months	26 years	AD, NSW
Kate	Playroom two younger children	36 months	27 years	AD, NSW
Ursula		23 months	24 years	AD, QLD
Susan		72 months	42 years	M, NSW
Beth	Roving assistant	1 month	49 years	
Mary	Director	11 months	27 years	D, QLD
Carol	Cook	60 months	35 years	
Nancy	Administrator	72 months	27 years	

Table 3.1

Details of Staff

** All names used are pseudonyms

*AD = Associate Diploma from TAFE

D = University Degree in teaching

M = Mothercraft Nurse

FACILITATION OF FORMAL LEARNING PROCESSES

Reasons for Assessing the Use of the D.I.S.C. as a Learning Exercise

As a facilitator over many years, I have used the D.I.S.C. as a component in courses in a variety of circumstances, with large and small groups, in workplaces and in general facilitation of groups. Each time I have used this

exercise, I have reflected on its impact and value. I have discussed its merits and demerits with many professional people. I wanted to understand its impact, and my role in that impact, more thoroughly. I was aware that often this type of process is imposed on workers, particularly if the sessions actually take place in the workplace, and I wanted to reflect on what impression this could have on participants.

· The Effects of the Physical Setting and Time of the Facilitation

The team development program I facilitated at the Centre had sessions once a month for three months on Monday nights at regular staff meeting times. The facilitation took place at the end of the working day after the children had left. The staff either arranged for one person to bring in refreshments or prepared light snacks for themselves before each session. The session took place in the small staff room, which was a familiar space for the staff. This avoided the barrier of getting used to an unfamiliar space, which is often the case in learning and development situations. It also meant that the learning was closely related to the working environment.

Staff lockers, a desk and bookshelves took up considerable space in the room. Chairs were set against the wall and around a coffee table. An unused door at the end of the room was used as a 'flip-chart' board on which 'butcher's' paper was attached to use for writing. This setting created for me a feeling of intimacy . It brought me, as the facilitator, physically and psychologically closer to the participants, allowing me to feel that I became an integral part of the group. This setting also created a very casual group atmosphere conducive to discussion.

Staff Participation in the Learning and Development Sessions

The involvement of the participants in the experiential learning (and research) process undertaken during the course of this study demonstrated their general interest and willingness to develop their working relationships and team performance. In formal and casual situations, they indicated their desire for change in personal workplace practices. As one staff member commented: "Learning new ways to look at things makes us work better together" (Ursula, 14 July 1995).

There was a high level of group interaction and apparent listening in the sessions, with much agreement, as well as constructive disagreement, and acknowledgment of others' feelings. Ideas seemed freely given and, at no time during the sessions, was there a shortage of participation.

Staff members voiced an understanding of the expectations for staff members to participate in compulsory learning and development as a normal part of their work which they enjoyed. They added enthusiasm for participating in the process that provided an atmosphere conducive to reflection and learning.

Staff were given reading material before and during the sessions to reinforce learning and understanding. From the comments made by some members at interviews, it was clear that these had not been read widely. They had been placed in professional folders to be referred to "later when I've got time to read them" (Mandy, 11 August 1995). Some indicated that they had read the material when they talked about the content of the hand-outs in the interviews. This difference in utilisation of resources could be related to many factors, one of which could be personality type and the ways

The Effect of the Methods of Facilitation Used

The one-hour time frame and the resource constraints on facilitation limited the work that I could do with the group and the length and depth of deliberations. I was also aware of the group's physical tiredness at the end of a working day, so I was conscious not to take more time than had been allocated to me. The lack of space was limiting. When tasks were given to participants to work in pairs, it was difficult for them to stay focused because of their close proximity to each other.

The group's contributions were written on 'butcher's' paper to give participants the opportunity to review their thoughts and sharpen their perceptions. It also provided an opportunity for participants to have their comments recognised as worthy of being openly recorded. It provided a ready reference for information and an opportunity for recall during the session and afterwards. Some of these 'flip-charts' were kept between sessions and put on the notice board in the staff room. The process of using many different coloured pens added variety to the presentation. In providing learning tools to suit different learning styles, it was important to introduce a number of different strategies into the learning process. For instance, personal reflection time, participatory exercises, brainstorming, role playing, hand-outs, sharing knowledge and experiences, relating personal stories and working in pairs were techniques used to maintain the group's interest.

During the sessions, I constantly provided feedback to the staff on their contributions, through affirmations of their statements, additional information, clarification through questioning or explanation, acknowledgment and acceptance of their input, reinforcement of ideas or

statements and the use of a level of empathy where appropriate. Each of the three sessions were linked to the others through discussion of their relevance and referral back to earlier sessions and points that had been raised at these times.

The Nature of the Learning and Development Process

The theories developed from this research had their basis in three initial sessions conducted on site at the Centre. The sessions actively involved the workers. Initially, three one-hour sessions were designed with the aim of increasing team development, building staff confidence in dealing with personal issues and developing and extending self-esteem in the workplace.

In the first session, the needs of the staff were assessed and possible future sessions were planned by asking them what they would like to work on in the time available over the following sessions. The options presented to the staff had been developed after dialogue with the director. She had requested an emphasis on personal development/self-esteem/team building, as this is what had been requested by some of the staff after the director had reported to them on other courses that I had run for child care workers.

Future sessions were then outlined. Exercises on personal values and self-esteem were undertaken. The exercises were designed to create some understanding of other staff members and their personal values in order to build peer understanding. Definitions of self-esteem were brainstormed by the participants and linked with the concept of self-image: where it is developed; how it is built up; and how people see themselves. Self-esteem was also linked to staff relationships with the children with whom they

work. The concept of self-acceptance of emotional states and change were discussed. Theories of self-esteem were presented. At the end of this session, a handout from The Conflict Resolution Network (CRN) manual on the D.I.S.C. exercise was given to the participants to consider before the next session (See Appendix 1). I explained that it was to give them an idea of what we would be exploring next time. I briefly explained personality types and suggested they assess if they fitted into any one of the four types.

In the second session, which I saw as the core of the process for team development, staff members were actively involved in the D.I.S.C. model of personality-types used by the Conflict Resolution Network. This exercise is designed to help participants to understand their own and others' personalities. They can begin to see how they work together and find a way of understanding each other that can help them to work harmoniously. When conflicts do arise, this model is able to be used as one tool toward resolving them through the development of empathy for the way others behave. It also assists individuals to find more constructive ways of using their own strengths to enhance their work practices.

Only one staff member had found the time to study the D.I.S.C. handout before the second session. She had assessed her place in it. We talked about the qualities characterising each type the uses of this type of classification, the dangers involved, the ethical issues and how it could be used productively by staff members. The session involved the staff in exploring the D.I.S.C. model.

In introducing the exercise to the participants, I emphasised the importance of considering ethical issues, such as labelling or categorising people. An

introduction was given about the heterogeneous nature of types in individuals and the way people behave in certain circumstances depending on the environment, culture, time, place and relationships. I referred to Jung's (1923) and Myers-Briggs's (1983) perceptions on personality types. I also introduced the notion that no personality style is superior or inferior to another. This is an important element to consider in order to give all participants a sense of their own and others' personal value no matter what personality type they may be. These points were stressed throughout the activity as I explained the concepts of self-worth and personal value, and we considered the behaviours of each type, considering the balances between the types. I also talked about the balance and combination of behaviours within individuals and how these change depending on circumstance. Instructions for the exercise were taken from the CRN Training Manual (1994) (See Appendix 2).

The hand-out from session one was reviewed. Dialogue occurred around staff members' views of themselves in the personality trait quadrants. I explained that probably only five percent of the community were entirely in one quadrant and seven percent in all four. The rest are mixed between the four, usually with more strength in one quadrant (Herrmann, 1993; while Herrmann's work was related to brain dominance, it links closely with the four quadrants of the D.I.S.C.). We talked about the behaviours characterising each personality type, and the classifications, the dangers involved, the ethical issues and how the tool could be constructively used by staff members. The staff expressed interest in the fact that they were likely to behave differently in various circumstances and that their personalities and behaviours were not fixed. They commented on individual circumstances in which they could see the different behaviours they used, according to the situation; for example, the difference between

their behaviour when they were with someone they felt close to compared to being in the company of strangers.

Then, the staff physically moved into one of four areas in the room delineating the four quadrants of the D.I.S.C., according to specific instructions describing sets of personal qualities as described in the CRN manual. When the staff had divided themselves into the quadrants, four were in the Direct, four in the Influencer, none in the Stabiliser and one in the Conscientious quadrant. During the exercise one moved to the Stabiliser from the Direct quadrant. (This was extended after one staff member, who had been away and one new member were included, as shown in Figure 3.2). Dialogue was then held about the qualities of each type.

Conscientious Susan Jenny	Direct Mary Nancy
Stabiliser Bev Belinda	Influencer Mandy Karla Kate Ursula

Figure 3.2
D.I.S.C. Distribution of Staff

The discussion during the exercise was animated. Comments included references to working with each other and being more aware of themselves and of each other. Toward the end of the session, when we had talked through their ideas and thoughts about personalities, one of the staff members, Belinda, who had put herself in the Direct quadrant, began to say that she was not really a Direct person "inside". She had changed her mind from the time she had studied the hand-out before the session. She said she

Application

that she was not really a Direct person “inside”. She had changed her mind from the time she had studied the hand-out before the session. She said she “related a lot” to the Stabiliser characteristics. She talked about her experiences as a school girl, where she was pushed aside, being seen as “unimportant” because she had glasses and plaits and was rather quiet. So, as she grew older, she became determined to be noticed and so took on more Direct qualities. She commented that she now related to those qualities and spoke out to be heard. Yet, she felt most comfortable being in the Stabiliser quadrant. After more discussion, I asked her if she wanted to move physically (the staff were sitting in each quadrant) over to the Stabiliser space and she did. She commented that she wanted to be more a Direct person but is usually a Stabiliser.

My judgement of the situation was that she was quite genuine in her positional change. While she was in a chair in the Direct quadrant she was sitting upright and when she sat in the Stabiliser quadrant, she had her legs stretched out in front of her. This may only have been because of the shape of the chair. However, she did appear more relaxed, which could be a further indication of her genuineness in her assessment of her personality type. She had made a very strong statement to her peers and had possibly made herself quite vulnerable.

I had reservations about asking Belinda about what had occurred because I did not want to be too invasive, and yet I wanted her thoughts on what had occurred and also to give her the opportunity to talk it through. I was interested to find out from her:

- What happened to her before, during and after the experience of the D.I.S.C. exercise.

- What were the repercussions, if any, that she noticed.
- How comfortable or uncomfortable had she found the whole experience.
- How had it affected her.
- What were the responses , if any, from the other staff members.
- What changes occurred as a result of her interactions with her peers since the exercise.
- What were her feelings about personality typing.

The rest of the staff felt quite comfortable in the positions in which they had placed themselves and evinced growing confidence of their position as we talked about the qualities of the types and how each person had some qualities of the other types and still felt more comfortable in one of the quadrants.

For the third session, the staff chose the subject of appropriate assertiveness. In the session, I introduced the concept of 'I messages'⁹ and practised with various actual scenarios. The concept of projection of feelings onto others with whom we relate (Jung, in Cornelius, 1994, p108) was demonstrated and exercises were conducted. A guided meditation was led to broaden this concept. Other short workshops at each of four consecutive staff meetings were held on other aspects of personal development and working together.

Observations About the Learning and Development Process

I had many ethical concerns throughout the process of this study in relation to the learning exercises. I was also interested in whether it was efficacious in contributing to the creation of a better working environment. My

⁹ The formula for "I messages" is "I feel _when_ because _and what I'd like is_" It is used as an opener to conversation to lead to further discussion of difficult topics.

(mistake seen)

The Roles of the Facilitator, Participants and the Organisation in Team Development Facilitation

In relation to facilitation, there are factors that I assessed that were necessary to consider for those involved - the facilitator, the participants and the organisation.

The facilitator needs the skills and experience to usefully and ethically conduct experiential exercises in personal development facilitation. The considerations she needs to make involve the value of the facilitation, the environment in which it is being conducted, the context of the organisation and those working within it, and organisational expectations of the staff and herself. She needs to have the ability to acknowledge her own needs and the needs of the learners and accept their contributions.

The participants are influenced by their relationships with other participants and what they expect from the facilitation. They need to be able to have the opportunity to contribute to the facilitation and take responsibility for their own learning. They need to critically reflect on their learning and the content of the facilitation.

The organisation's responsibility lies in the support they provide for their staff before, during and after exercises. They need to consider appropriate programs (and facilitators) for their staff after consultation with them. They need to be aware of environmental conditions.

All have an obligation to maintain confidentiality in relation to personal issues raised in the learning and development processes.

INTERVIEWS FOLLOWING FACILITATION

Following the three initial facilitations, individual interviews were conducted with the ten staff members who had attended. I tried to create an interview environment in which they felt, and were, safe in terms of confidentiality, lack of judgement, and empathy. The individual interviews lasted between half an hour and one hour. I terminated the interviews only when I felt that the staff member had said all that they wanted to say.

The personal interviews were conducted mainly at the Centre, usually before or after work times. Two staff members chose to be interviewed at local coffee lounges where it was felt that they would be more relaxed and not so likely to be interrupted. One of these was in addition to the planned process of interviews when the staff member expressed an interest in pursuing a particular issue further.

The formal interviews took from twenty minutes to one and a half hours. At the end of the first interview, when I asked the staff member how she had felt about me taking notes, she said it "was fine." Hence, notes were taken (in shorthand) at each interview, after the participants had been asked if this was acceptable to them. Tape recordings were not used because some staff had expressed the wish that they not be used because it made them nervous. One said she "wouldn't have felt very comfortable." Another staff member commented that: "I thought: if you're using that [a tape recorder] it's even worse."

The interviews were open-ended with one common question being asked at

recorder] it's even worse."

The interviews were open-ended with one common question being asked at the beginning of the interview about the participants' perceptions of the facilitation sessions, particularly the use of the D.I.S.C. exercise. Other questions were devised by me in the event that they were not addressed by the interviewees (See Appendix 3). Following the interviews, each person interviewed was given a transcript of their interview within two days. They were asked to confirm or make changes to these transcripts where necessary. All participants accepted their transcripts without changing their opinions or statements, except in one case where there had been a minor misinterpretation of what had been said. The interviews were broadened to include comments that had been raised by previous interviewees as the interview process proceeded. This gave the data an expansive direction and allowed for the compilation of categories. These categories were developed by analysing what the staff had said and then checking back with them through a presentation of the claims, issues and concerns that staff had raised and that I had grouped into the core categories.

The individual interviews were followed by group discussions in staff meetings. Other casual interactions between myself and the staff were generated through my regular attendance at the Centre at least twice weekly over a period of several months, where I interacted with the staff and the children on a spontaneous basis. The staff spoke freely to me during these times not only about the research topic but also about other topics in relation to child care, the Centre and its activities as well as some personal matters.

The Centre's parent organisation was given the opportunity to review the

research before it was published. They had stipulated, in their original acceptance of the research proposal, that they would want to examine all written material before it was published.

INFLUENCES ON THE RESEARCH

Conducting research qualitatively brings with it a variety of internal and exogenous influences that affect the actions and findings of the study.

Staff Involvement in the Research

Participants are more likely to participate in a research process when they are brought in as active participants and their views are sought (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). In introducing the research process to the staff members, I explained that I saw them as co-researchers and what that meant in relation to their input to the study and the final decisions on what would be included in the thesis writing. I explained the requirements of the University ethics committee, and that, if they wished, in the publication of the study, I would use pseudonyms and not name the Centre. I explained the nature of the research using the terms 'constructivist inquiry' and 'grounded theory' explaining what these terms meant.

I attempted to provide them with enough information to give them a full understanding of the process of the research and leave them with useful and practical outcomes. This information gave them the opportunity to make informed choices over their own participation in the activities related to this research (Lincoln, 1989). It was essential to have their input in order

to make the findings more viable. All the staff at the meeting agreed enthusiastically to take part, with nods of the head and smiles and "yes, that'd be good" and other short comments, that indicated that they would like to be involved. The Director said that she "felt honoured" to be part of this research, and that her senior manager in the child care organisation had agreed that it was "an honour to be recognised at such a high level." One of the staff members accepted my conducting the study but was not happy about being interviewed about her perceptions of what was happening, because of risks she perceived in speaking out about personal and confidential issues. The cleaning and cooking staff did not participate in the study, although the cook was very welcoming to me and consented to having my observations of her role included in the thesis. When the thesis was presented to the staff for comment before publication (about twelve months after the data were collected) the cook read it and then spent some time with me enthusiastically talking about her role in the Centre.

The staff welcomed me warmly and were interested in the research process and were open to my being at the Centre at any time. I gave them enough information about the study to provide them with an understanding of the process of the research and what the outcomes might mean to them. This gave them enough information to be able to make informed choices over their own participation in the activities related to the research (Lincoln, 1989).

I explained that I would be around quite often. They commented that this was "great" because it would provide them with "another pair of hands!" I was very aware of the need to be careful not to take advantage of their hospitality by taking up too much of their time, or going against any of their wishes for my role at the Centre. I did not want to be too intrusive,

My experience as a practitioner in early childhood development allowed me to be able to interact in appropriate ways with the staff and children within session times. During the research, I often spent time being with the children and joined in some activities where it was appropriate.

The Hawthorne Effect was relevant to the staff's participation in this study because they were in the unfamiliar situation of being research subjects and were likely to react in a different manner to familiar situations (Borg, 1989; Thompson & McHugh, 1991). This effect seemed to decrease, as Borg points out, as the novelty of the new situation wore off.

Findings may not be generalisable to a situation in which the same sets of conditions are not present because the combination of variables changes within each setting. It is indeed difficult to generalise from one situation to another even in the same location, occurring at another time, because original variables will have changed, affecting the experience and its outcome.

The enthusiastic involvement of staff in the learning and development and research processes of this study created an opportunity for me to be able to more fully understand and learn about the nature of team development and the part that learning through a facilitated process can play in that development.

From My Perspective as the Facilitator/Researcher

The outcomes of this study were influenced and shaped during the inquiry by the interactions between myself as the facilitator/researcher and the participants. Being included in a research project of this nature put the staff in a situation where they became personally involved. They were able to express their feelings and thoughts and have time to reflect on their thinking and actions in the Centre. I was also fully immersed in the process and was able to acknowledge my own ideas and convictions based on my experience, observations and interests and use these to guide my interpretations of the data. During the course of the research, I was well aware of the effect of the research on my own self-inquiry process, as described by Schratz and Walker (1995), Smith (1992), and Strauss (1989). I had the most invested in the study. It was not possible for me to be detached from the study because of my close association with the participants through the learning situations, personal interactions with them at the workplace, and in the interviews. Many of the issues the participants raised with me were personal and could not be treated merely as facts. The human element was the most important aspect to consider because the thoughts and feelings individual staff members have of each other can have far-reaching effects on them personally and professionally.

Results of any study depend on the interaction between the inquirer and object (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). Smith (1992) agrees that social research is inextricably as much personal as it is scientific. Lincoln (1990) comments that instead of researchers in social inquiry being seen as detached observers they become the professional participants. Social research is constituted by processes of individual and social reflexivity and reciprocity - how researchers see their research in relation to themselves.

As I was part of the study, not detached from it (Schatz & Walker, 1995), and I became the measuring instrument (Phillips, 1990), it was important to be aware of the potential for personal biases (Soltis, 1991). I filtered the information gathered through my eyes. My past experiences, beliefs and interest and blind spots had an effect on the information collected and analysed (Clark, 1991). Guba and Lincoln (1989) state that socially constructed realities are absolutely dependent on the observer for whatever existence they may have. It is not possible for the observer to stand at a respectful distance from the phenomenon being studied. The inquirer and inquired-into are interlocked, so that findings are the creation of the inquiry process. It is impossible to separate them. Schofield (1993) and Smith (1992) also consider that research is very much influenced by the researcher's attributes and perspectives, interests, purposes and values. Schratz and Walker (1995) further point out that the researchers' perceptions guide their actions, movements and location. Information that is collected is shaped and influenced merely by choosing what is to be collected and how it is analysed. Senge (1992) states that [researchers] observe selectively and shape their perceptions through their mental models. Guba and Lincoln (1989) see constructivist inquiry as a form of vicarious experience.

As the study progressed, the phenomena underlying the effects of team development facilitation , personal development exercises, and being part of the research, became increasingly more clear to me. The practical nature of the study allowed for exploration of what happened to "real" people in "real" situations (Clark, 1991). In this process, I was able to give the participants something they could use: "information, power, the tools to exercise that power and the rights to say in what way the information and power surrounding it would be used" (Smith, 1992, p293).

Within my research, I was involved in a non-linear process of personal development and learning, as described in Figure 3.3. It is an action research process of continually learning from my actions and the responses from participants and adjusting my approaches according to what appears to be transpiring.

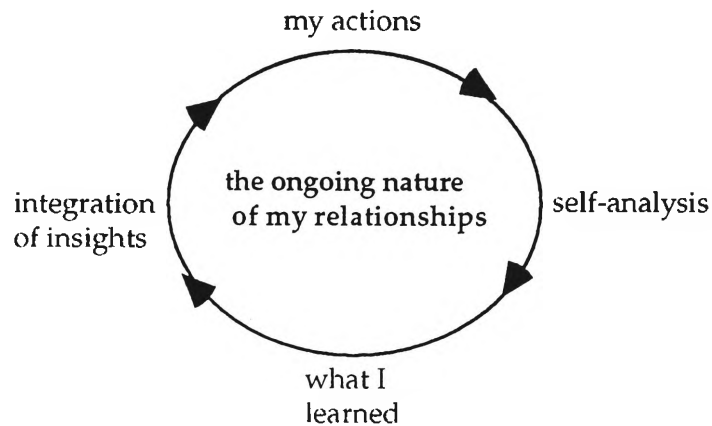


Figure 3.3
My Cycle of Relationships Within this Study (devised by the author)

It was important for me to constantly be aware of the perspective of others involved with this study because of the powerful and privileged position I held as a researcher and facilitator in a case study situation. I needed to constantly be using the feedback loop of the hermeneutic dialectic process to inform myself of my effect on participants.

SUMMARY

This chapter has set the scene for the rest of the study. It has described what happened in the Centre during the study. I have outlined the demographics of the Centre to present the context in which the study was conducted. The learning and development process that I conducted with the staff has been described, showing the high level of staff involvement and interest, as shown by their willingness to talk with me about their

thoughts on the process and the interactions at the Centre. I have outlined my reasons for using the particular learning and development process of the D.I.S.C. (which were that to learn of one's own and others personality types can facilitate greater understanding between staff) which was the main part of the exercise and discussed its immediate effects. I have described the roles that the facilitator, participants and organisation have in the learning and development process and the interdependence that resulted. The interview process has also been delineated. The impact of the staff and of myself as the facilitator/researcher on the research have also been outlined.

Where this chapter has touched on practical aspects of my facilitation and research, in the following chapter, I will describe in theoretical terms how I conducted the study. I will describe the methods used to gather and analyse the data and explain the reasons for using these methods. I will also incorporate the literature as it relates to the research process.

CHAPTER FOUR

METHOD

Qualitative research is a set of social processes characterised by fragile and temporary bonds between persons who are attempting to share their lives and create from that sharing a larger and wider understanding of the world.

Lincoln, 1989

Everything is grist for the formal theorist's mill.

Strauss and Corbin, 1989

Things always take much, much longer than they do.

Guba and Lincoln, 1989

INTRODUCTION

This chapter contains a detailed description of the methods I used to conduct this study. The aim of the study was to ascertain the impact that a combination of formal learning processes and research activities had on a group of people who work together in a child care centre. Resulting insights led to the formulation of a perspective on formal learning and its place in team development. The purpose of the research was to inform the reader about what happens when a facilitator/researcher interacts, through a series of formal and casual associations, with a working group in a process designed to enhance group performance.

The need for, and interest in, this research evolved from my extensive experience in facilitation of experiential learning exercises in personal and team development in a variety of workplaces. Strauss and Corbin (1989)

consider that the more professional experience researchers have, the richer their knowledge base and insight.

The empirical part of the research began when I was asked by the Director of the Tailor's Valley Child Care Centre to conduct exercises in team building and self-esteem for staff. From the beginning of the study, I engaged in a process of regular dialogue with the participants over a period of six months (through facilitating learning exercises, attending staff meetings, conducting individual interviews, attending social outings, talking with staff on the telephone, and interacting with them and the children during working hours). This led to a relationship being developed with the staff that allowed for creative, mutual problem solving (Smith, 1991). The Director of the Centre ensured my acceptance into the group with her support and enthusiasm for the research. She commented that it was "an honour" to be asked to participate.

The interactive nature of the research between myself and the staff at the Centre generated insights into learning and team development. Details of staff responses, procedures and operational logic around a core analytical category of 'teams' were integrated to generate a theory that accounted for patterns of behaviour relevant to the staff involved in this study. The analysis revealed some of the human dimensions of learning and team development in a child care setting.

THE PROBLEM

External facilitators are often brought into organisations to conduct exercises in personal development as part of a process of team building. They are

usually required to run one-off events that are expected to make a difference to how the team functions. There appears to be overwhelming evidence that most short-term staff development has little or no lasting impact (Turbill, 1993), and therefore is not successful in bringing about desired changes to how a work group performs. Formal learning practices are unlikely to produce changes to work practices if they are not linked to other developments in the workplace. They can, however, form a component in the process of team development when included as part of a long-term, broad approach taking into account other aspects of staff and employer needs. It was expected that this research would illustrate to other organisations such considerations so that they could provide improved (and ethical) learning and team development programs for their staff.

My professional practice in teaching and learning over many years formed the platform for this thesis. My previous postgraduate studies in special education, my practical experience in workplace research projects (such as a quasi-experimental study I conducted on a drug education program for preschool and primary school children, and research into Aboriginal early childhood education) together with my involvement in writing research modules on methodology for a community organisation course for TAFE (Institute of Technical And Further Education), and my involvement with evaluation study groups provided me with knowledge of qualitative research that equipped me with a firm foundation for the methodological basis for this study.

The study was designed to take into account both endogenous and exogenous variables that could affect the outcomes. Variables included the environment; personal attitudes, interactions and personalities; management styles; organisational directions and structures; learning

materials; and my role as the facilitator and researcher. The study did not begin with an *a priori* theory because that could have blocked some outcomes of both the facilitation and the research.

CHOICE OF METHODS

The reason for choosing qualitative research methods, rather than quantitative methods, for this study was that qualitative research allows for the variances that are likely to occur due to the many factors that influence human interactions. My past experience in the use of quantitative processes led me to the opinion that, in this study, it would not provide me with the detailed information I was looking for about how people felt and reflected on their situation. I avoided using either questionnaires or formally constructed interview questions because I did not want to preempt the responses of the participants to questions posed in the thesis. It was important for me to be able to allow them to express their opinions and lead the way in the interviews, as much as possible, so that I was not imposing my values or directions on their reflections.

Diagram 4.1 shows the combination of methods I used to develop the theory that emerged from the interactions and feedback from the staff.

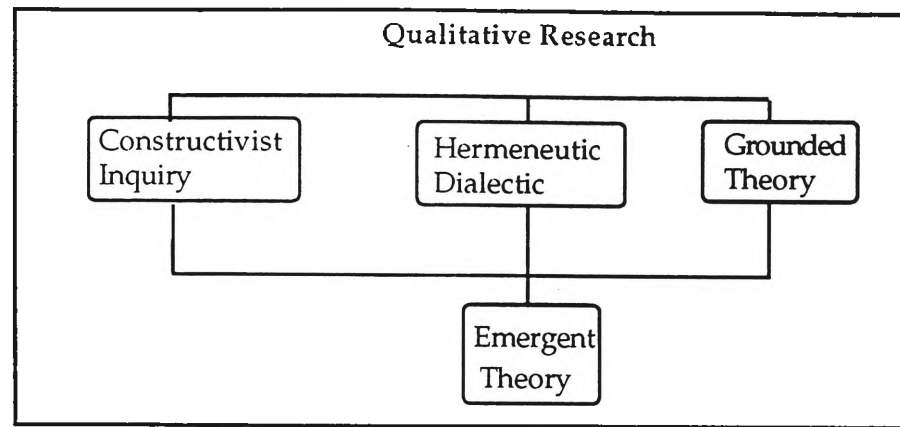


Figure 4.1
The Qualitative Methods Used to Create a Theory on Facilitation and Team Building

Qualitative research allows for consideration of personal impressions and observations of changes to show what is happening over time and how these changes occur. Workers and workplaces are not static. They evolve and change continuously. This was an important consideration in this research in order to be able to discover the effects of personal development learning on a working group. The emphasis for the study was on describing and interpreting the participants' views of their situation, rather than general theorising. My involvement with the staff was intensive and ongoing. This is an essential part of qualitative research (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). It contextualises life experience to give it a coherent social meaning (Smith, 1991). The qualitative approach to this work included using a form of inquiry that developed from the participants' beliefs and behaviours.

The Place of Literature Within the Research Process

The details of the literature review were expounded in Chapter Two. My intention here is to emphasise the interactive nature of that review and the empirical work. The literature review was conducted in two ways - initially when it led the inquiry and conversely when the inquiry led to further

readings. The reviews were interwoven into the practice of the research, not undertaken in isolation. The literature experiences formed part of my experiential data, which was also drawn from my personal and research experience. As I had been working as a facilitator for many years, my reading on the area was already extensive. Schratz and Walker's (1995) consideration that what makes the literature review work are the judgements the researcher makes of each piece read about its importance and relevance in the area of study, validated my personal knowledge and discernment.

The area of my study - relationships in learning and teamwork - lent itself to a wide variety of areas in which to read. The reading provided me with a flow of learning and extension of knowledge in a process that linked my thoughts, sometimes taking me into unexpected waters. As I found, literature "provides useful information that bears upon the emergent construction ... not ultimate truths" (Walker, 1989, p211).

When I began my research, I did not have prior knowledge of all the categories that would develop, although experience had given me many ideas. As I gathered and analysed the data, I looked for relevant literature to fit the elements that were emerging, to make comparisons between the data and literature. I began with multiple intelligences, linking that to brain dominance. This was connected to personality types, which preceded reading on the facilitation component of the literature. That involved the ethics of formal learning situations, which led to consideration of the ethics of research and research methods. As further categories began to emerge from the analysis of the data, I reviewed the literature pertinent to them. These areas included conflict management, communication, reflective and critical thinking and learning styles, systems theory, management styles,

psychology, group behaviour, teams and the role of consultants in workplaces.

Steps In Methodology

Some basic generative questions were developed around the subject of learning and team development. These related to the concepts the staff had of the facilitation. Data from the facilitation process and my personal contact with the participants were collected through observations, interviews and feedback from the staff. The data from the interviews were coded through a process of analysing what was said by the staff and making linkages. The analysis was completed by underlining words and phrases that I saw as significant. I then made comments on these and assigned categories from these comments. A variety of categories emerged, with core (or main) categories arising from them. These core categories were in the areas of: teams, facilitation and research. The categories were presented to the group for comment or suggestions until consensus had been reached. The theory that emerged was then integrated into the writing. During the entire process, I kept personal memos on the data and their analysis. The process was not linear. It had many links as shown in Figure 4.2.

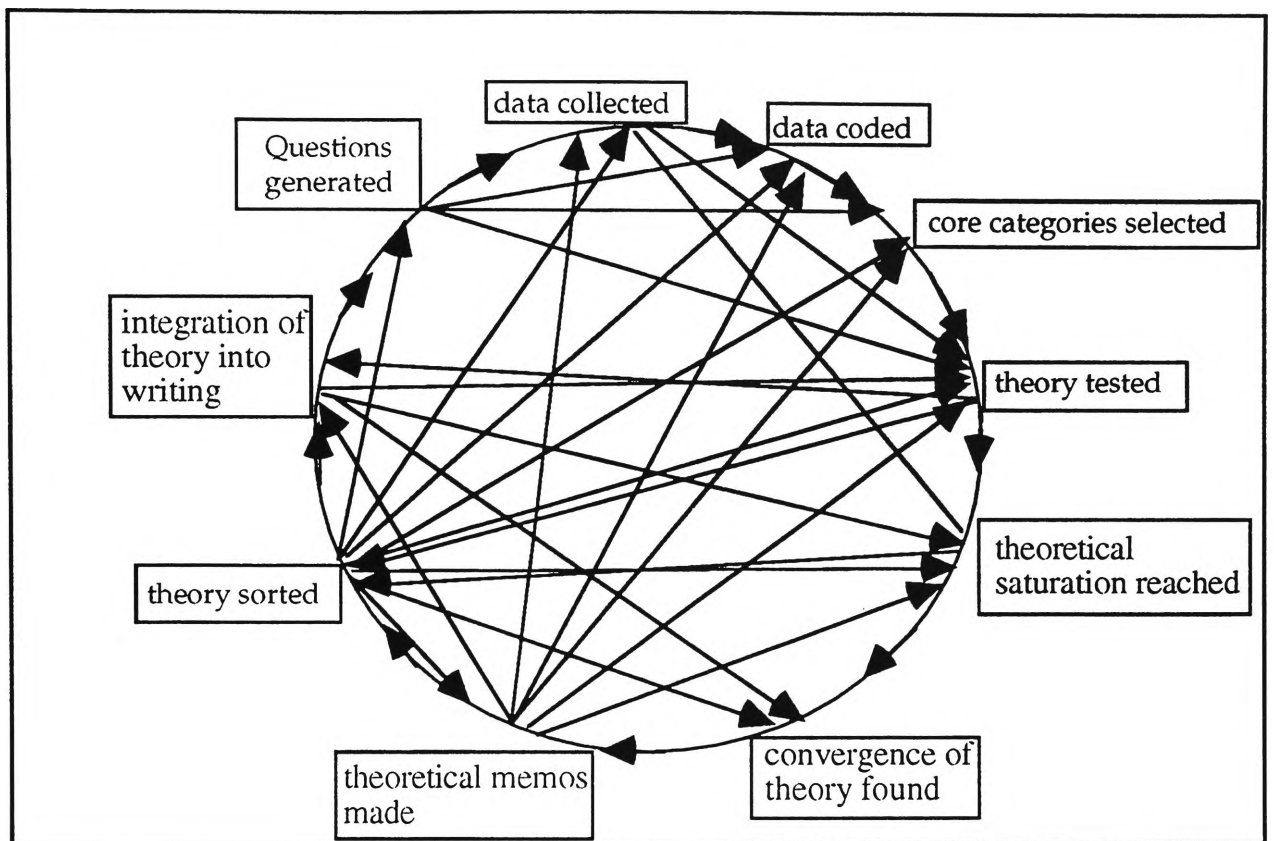


Figure 4.2
Steps in Coding (devised by the author adapted from Strauss, 1989)

The inquiry used anecdotal and contextual data of what happened in the work place to support the development of the study. The study generated a theory based on data grounded in a workplace, specifying conditions that gave rise to particular sets of actions. The intervening conditions that either facilitated or constrained the actions of the participants were taken into account and used to make the findings more verifiable.

I combined the research methods advocated by Guba and Lincoln (1989) and Strauss and Corbin (1989). Guba and Lincoln provided me with the basic steps in the conduct of the study, emphasising the personal aspects of a research study. Strauss and Corbin gave me the technical structure upon which I based the collection and analysis of the data.

I began with a discussion with the participants about to undertake the study and its implications. They were each given an ethics consent form to sign

and return to me (See Appendix 5). This outlined the nature of the research and their part in it. Their consent indicated their willingness to participate in the research. The consent of the Centre's parent organisation was also sought and gained (See Appendix 6).

The inquiry process was flexible to allow staff to participate in interviews and other meetings as their time permitted. The formal learning sessions were organised around normal staff-meeting times and were dedicated to the facilitation. Feedback and discussion sessions were held with the whole staff at further staff meetings. I assessed the enthusiasm of the staff for the process in a staff meeting and with individual staff at other times.

As a result of the data analysis, a presentation was made to the staff of the constructions I had developed. At this session, the staff were given the opportunity to comment on the findings, particularly those from the interviews. It was only necessary to change one of my findings due to feedback at this session. The rest were acceptable to the staff, as indicated by their statements that they would be using the findings as a basis for their planning for the following year.

The Case Study

The main focus of the research was a case study. I used this approach because it was a useful, realistic and practical focus for collecting and analysing data. It provided detailed information that could inform others in similar situations. More information was generated than was needed, as is normally the case in case studies (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). While it is not possible to replicate circumstances or to generalise reliably from one site or time to another (Guba & Lincoln, 1989, p45), because variables change and

therefore outcomes differ, it is hoped that an aggregation of knowledge from the one site I studied may be of value to others.

Case studies can take a number of forms and be grounded in different methodologies. In this instance, one workplace was chosen to consider the impact of facilitation and research on individuals and the work group as a whole. Within the case study, the participants were involved in the direction of the research process through my regular interactions with them in individual and group conversations.

Guba and Lincoln's Hermeneutic Dialectic Process

I included the use of joint constructions based on staff feedback, arising out of hermeneutic dialectic processes. This process, described by Guba and Lincoln (1989), involves interviewing and feedback to participants until consensus is reached on constructions, such as their assessment of working relationships.

The theory was developed through a cycle of talking with the participants and then checking back with them and others on points that had been raised. The "hermeneutic dialectic" method provided data that were sensitive to the participants' needs, were flexible, were and open to change. This method also allowed participants and the researcher to include personal experiences and reflections in the study. The hermeneutic dialectic process engaged participants in a holistic dialogue. It did not take the form of directive or leading questions and statements that I had formulated before the interviews. It used a continuing dialectic of iteration, analysis, critique, reiteration, and reanalysis leading to joint constructions. It allowed stakeholders in the research to recognise and interpret group

and/or individual perceptions and prejudices and provided them with an opportunity for revised or entirely new constructions to emerge. This was achieved through a process of reaching shared agreements on findings.

The questions became more focused as the research progressed and the data were analysed. The emergent design was continuously refined and extended until joint constructions emerged. The process involved participants at every level, from interviews to giving them copies of interview transcripts that I had analysed.

The four phases of Guba and Lincoln's (1989) hermeneutic dialectic process as they apply to this thesis can be formally summarised as follows:

1. Finding a group with which to work and asking them if they want to become part of the study; creating an emic¹⁰ rather than an etic¹¹ view by identifying the participants' claims, concerns and issues.
2. Presenting the analysis of their claims, concerns and issues to them for comment, refutation, and/or agreement.
3. Further analysis and action based on their responses.
4. Collaborating with them to gain their input into the findings.

Figure 4.3 shows the interconnections between the elements of the study.

¹⁰ Coming from within the group

¹¹ Externally generated

AN OVERVIEW OF ELEMENTS OF THE STUDY

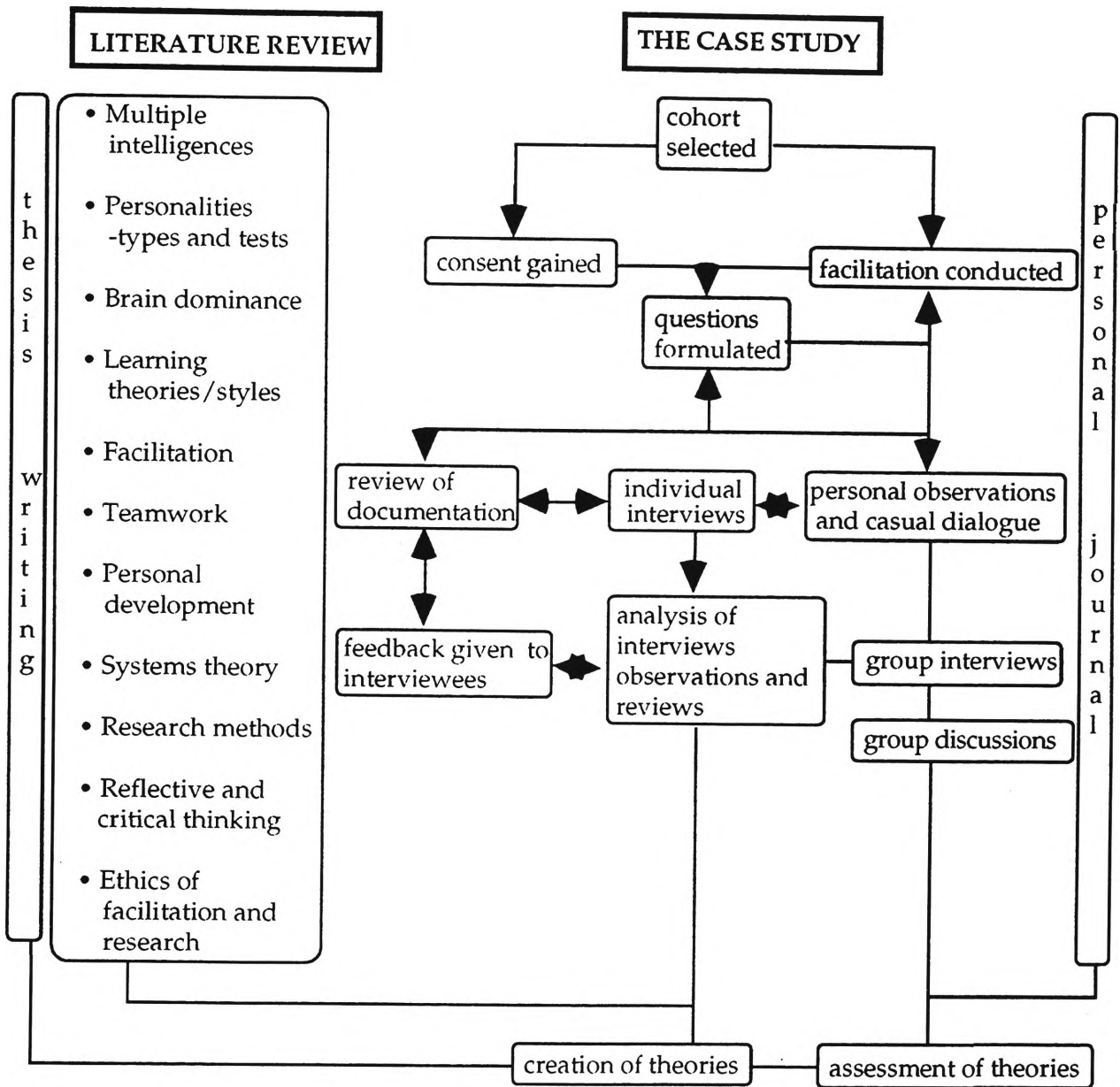


Figure 4.3
Interconnections Between the Elements of the Study

This is a theoretically sensitive process which bases the theory on the data, not producing theories before the data are collected. It allows for the researcher's findings to be confirmed by the participants to ensure reliability and acceptance.

It involved gathering enough description to clarify the context of the facilitation and team development within the Centre and make its meaning clear to the reader. The researcher worked with the stakeholders to choose the information to be included. Selection depended on issues such as confidentiality and importance and relevance to the research.

It was most important to introduce information supplied in interviews by the staff that would in no way identify them or other staff, as this was a condition of their original consent to participate in the study. Staff then felt comfortable talking about personal and relationship issues, knowing that this private reflection would not be revealed in a way that could be detrimental to individuals or the group as a whole. Hence, the reporting of responses and data in this study remain confidential.

The process of assuring confidentiality began with discussion with the Director. I then asked the staff at the first session if they would be prepared to participate in the study. Detailed explanations of the process and outcomes of the research were given to them. They agreed in principle, dependent on further understanding of what it might mean for them to participate. They individually signed consent forms approved by the University of Wollongong Ethics Committee.

Collection and Analysis of Data

Part of the process of research I followed was put forward by Strauss (1989). I collected "thick" data, particularly from interviews. This was coded to find core categories, which were itemised and compared until there was no more to be gained by finding more information.

Data were collected through observations, facilitation, interviews, group discussions, informal talks, writings in a personal journal and perusal of relevant documents. The process of data collection included formulating thoughts and ideas that needed clarification, collecting conceptually dense data, and making links with coding to form new data. This coding was used to integrate the most salient parts of the evolving theory. The coding was generated from the analysis of my thoughts on the content of the interviews. It consisted of finding categories to explain the phenomena that were emerging as relevant to the participants. For example, many of the participants commented on relationships within the team, and these comments on intra-team relationships became a category that was then integrated into a core category of teams as it related to how the team worked together.

Analysis

Analysis and coding of the data were conducted immediately after each interview so that the information gained from the interview became part of the agenda in subsequent data collection. The data were analysed by breaking them down into meaningful parts through dissecting of individual phrases and words. Then I analysed the selected words and phrases to make some sort of meaning and order out of them. I sought categories that became common throughout the analysis and coding. An example of this coding process from interviews is shown in Table 4.1, which is an extract from an interview with Mary on 26 July 1995. It demonstrates how the categories emerged. There was, for example, a recurrence of terms such as roles and responsibilities, team work, professionalism, facilitation effectiveness, personalities, relationships, management, reflection self-analysis and analysis of others.

categories	transcript	analysis
Facilitation effectiveness	When I asked how the <u>D.I.S.C.</u> worked she said: It was <u>helpful to a degree of basic awareness</u> . It <u>only just skimmed the surface</u> .	Needs more input. Acknowledgment that there is much more to learn.
Personalities	We <u>need to have appreciation of differences</u> .	
Facilitation effectiveness	I <u>thought it was excellent</u> . It was <u>put in a black and white way</u> but I think that <u>people are caught up in their own personalities and it is hard to see others personalities</u> . <u>Only basic awareness can be expected from one hour</u> .	Pleased with exercise and recognises its limitations, including time factor, and the part people's own personalities have on how they react together.
Personalities, Team, Management responsibilities/ Professional standards	I <u>guess it is dealing with basic personality types</u> . I <u>just want people to respect each other and cut out the negativity</u> . <u>It really can get you (meaning herself) down</u> . <u>It can get at even the most placid people</u> .	Effort to understand how team works together and her role in that process.
Roles and responsibilities and expectations Professionalism	<u>Here is such a demanding job, it all comes crashing down</u> . <u>We have interdependent relationships</u> .	Awareness of own responsibilities as Director Lot is expected of a Director and it can become overwhelming. Concern about roles and what some see that others do and their perceptions of those different roles
Roles and responsibilities	<u>Because I'm in there and I have to do all the same role and also manage their role and set standards and expectations</u> . <u>Even though we have similar jobs, the roles are different</u> . There is <u>some sarcasm from other staff for the different roles</u> , showing <u>lack of appreciation by others</u> . It is <u>difficult for people to accept</u> .	
Team Relationships	<u>You have your friends</u> . <u>Sometimes we can have good friends at work</u> .	Cliques form at work. Personal relationships within the staff.
Team	(when I asked if some staff felt left out she said) I <u>think so</u> . <u>Some are in cliques</u> . At times <u>everybody has felt left out - whether it be that they are feeling down that day or whatever</u> . <u>If staff change friendships move</u> . I <u>don't think it's a major issue, not necessarily on social level, more on a team level</u> .	Relationship groups within team
Self-analysis	I've learnt a lot from [one particular father]. I've <u>learnt so much about myself from these people</u> . I don't know whether it's too selfish a view.	Exclusiveness - why it happens and how it changes is interesting. Analysing effect of others on own learning. Analysing others 'responses
Analysis of others Reflection Self-analysis	We're <u>all on a learning curve</u> and I don't think this curve will ever end. The way I view the centre is from my own frame of reference ,which is different for everyone else.	Self analysis of feelings and reflecting on her thinking

Table 4.1

Interview Transcript , Mary,. 29 July 1995

From the analysis of the notes from interviews conceptual codes were generated, and indicators were compared to emergent concepts. I looked for as many differences as possible in the dimensional levels of the data: its relevance, meaning, differences, properties, conditions and specific contexts. Events and behaviour were converted analytically into indicators that varied in detail. The indicators, such as perceptions about relationships and team concepts became categories by coding them, using a process that searches for underlying uniformity in the data. I compared each hypothesis to the data, making modifications and then checking it again with the participants and against other data. A list of interpretations of categories and subcategories gathered from the data was drawn up, including comparisons between portions of the data and an examination of possible alternative interpretations. This process continued until I found no new, relevant data and the relationships between the categories appeared to be well established and validated through feedback from the participants.

Coding represents the operations by which data were broken down, conceptualised and put back together in new ways. "Open coding" was used firstly to scrutinise in minute detail data that produced concepts of facilitation and team development. Short phrases or single words were examined. "Axial coding" followed with intense analysis around separate categories that appeared, looking at conditions and consequences of facilitation and participants' actions, leading to increasing knowledge about relationships between the categories. This was explored further to assess what was emerging as the main themes.

Core categories were found by selectively looking for common or main themes, or concerns that formed a pattern. These were integrated to make dense and saturated theory as relationships were discovered. Specific

connections were developed between categories in the form of conditions and consequences, interactions and strategies relating to the connection between facilitation and team development, personal development and relationships.

As part of the process of assessment of the facilitation program and the research, I (as the facilitator/researcher) addressed a series of questions relating to facilitation and research. I kept a personal journal throughout the study to collect information of a personal nature on discoveries, implications, thoughts, findings and interpretation. These reflections were integrated into the data to add an extra dimension to the findings. They included my perspectives on the staff members' reception of my theories and their acceptance of me and the research process. They also provided me with a space for collecting my thoughts on the concepts that were emerging, such as the shifting of staff relationships within the wider system of an organisation.

ETHICS OF FACILITATION AND RESEARCH

Throughout this research, ethical issues were a prime concern to me. As a facilitator and researcher in personal development facilitation and team building in a workplace, I was aware that what staff members were learning about other staff members could possibly be used in personally non-constructive ways. A further concern was that unrealistic expectations could be created from the learning, regarding dissatisfactions with work situations over which the staff may have had little or no real control. Material introduced could also be misinterpreted and used in unproductive

ways. For example, the phrase 'Conflict. What an opportunity!', used in the CRN facilitation method that I used, could be interpreted in a variety of ways. For example, it could be seen as having an unproductive meaning, that it is positive for any event to be used as an opportunity to create conflict!

Other concerns included: individuals disclosing more of their personal feelings than may have been advisable in front of their peers; staff accepting the facilitator's assertions as absolute truth, considering their own thoughts and feelings as less meaningful than the facilitators; and, staff being left with feelings which they were unsure how to follow through constructively.

I was aware of the need to keep the research material confidential, as agreed with the staff at the beginning of the research. This was difficult. It was necessary to get approval for the study from the parent organisation. This meant that they were then aware which centre was being studied. Also, people in the professional community knew that I was working with this particular centre and would probably be able to deduce that this centre was involved in my thesis.

In writing the study, I made a particular effort to keep individual comments confidential. This was difficult because it could still be obvious to others who had said certain things. Hence, it was important that the participants in the study felt confident that what was written was not destructive in any way to them or the Centre. I consider this vital in a workplace situation, where unintended consequences could arise from statements made by staff about other staff or situations. When the staff members were shown the material to be submitted as the thesis, and asked if it was acceptable, they all

approved of what had been written.

SUMMARY

In this chapter, I have outlined the process used in making decisions about the type of study undertaken and described the methods I used and the reasons for those choices. Much of my thinking on the choice of methods was influenced by Guba and Lincoln (1989), Smith (1991), Strauss and Corbin (1989), and Walker (1989), and also by my past experiences in research methods.

An explanation was given of the method used to find core categories by closely scrutinising words and phrases in notes from interviews and from reading relevant documents. These were linked to the literature. Together, they led to the development of my theories. These theories were tested through the grounded approach to data collection, taking place in the workplace with those who work there, rather than solely in my thinking processes. I have pointed out that my own constructions of the impact of facilitation on this team development process, along with my previous experience, also had an impact on the outcomes of the research.

The close, interactive relationship that developed between myself and the staff helped to generate concepts from analysis and coding of data that were acceptable to all of those involved in the process. The entire research was affected by the human dimensions (of myself and the staff members) of emotions, relationships, experiences and perspectives.

In the following chapter, I will present my analysis of the data gathered through the approaches described in this chapter. I will show the links between formal learning experiences in the workplace and the development of the team. I will outline the influences that affected the findings; the part staff participation impacted on the facilitation and the study; and the staff perceptions of their roles and responsibilities. I will describe my perceptions of the proportions of a team. The issues, concerns and claims the staff expressed will be shown as an analysis of their statements in the interviews.

CHAPTER FIVE

PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

Findings of research are rarely accepted by everyone.

Guba and Lincoln, 1989

INTRODUCTION

Conclusions from data collected from the Tailor's Valley Child Care Centre linked with findings gathered from literature associated with team building and facilitation are presented in this chapter in order to assess the value of formal learning experiences in the process of team development.

This analysis represents the formulation of joint constructions of the personal beliefs and perceptions of staff at the Centre and myself as the facilitator/researcher. The theory that emerged has been formally grounded in the day-to-day interactions of the staff at the Centre. It conceptualises the staff's involvement and resultant consequences of participating in formal, personal development, learning exercises and follow-up and is intended to address the issue of team building.

This chapter will outline the findings from the data that were grouped into categories. It will describe endogenous and exogenous influences that had an effect on the learning process. This will be followed by consideration of the participation level and attitudes of the staff toward the facilitation process. Staff perceptions of each other and their roles and responsibilities,

including personal and professional roles and professional support, will be discussed. Following this discussion, the factors effecting the team will be outlined noting the effect the formal learning process had on the team development from the staff's point of view. Issues, concerns and claims of the staff, which were collected mainly through the interview process, will be summarised to provide an overview of the findings. Staff responses to the findings will be outlined, and then the parts will be linked together to give a global view of the analysis.

CATEGORIES

Data are presented in this chapter in terms of categories that emerged in my analysis. The data were coded using a method of analysing transcripts from interviews to form distinct categories (see Appendix 9 for categories developed). The core category was the 'team', which linked all the others together. Before coding began, I had anticipated that the issues, concerns and claims of the group would be based on or around three themes - the facilitation, the organisation and individuals. The categories proved to aggregate into different themes, which are illustrated in Figure 5.1. Those that emerged from the analysis were actually around categories of:

- Staff relationships - individual concepts of staff relationships, analysis of others, the working environment and the effect of the age of staff, the impact of a group of women working together;
- Personal development - self analysis, dealing with feelings, coping mechanisms, modelling of behaviour on other people, personal acceptance, modelling, professional respect and communication;

- Professionalism - personal versus professional behaviour, work standards, staff development, meetings, roles and responsibilities of staff and managers, and professional respect; and
- Facilitation - effectiveness and impact, expertise and position, facilitation in personality type exercises, efficacy, intention, research methods, power relationship between the facilitator and the participants, ethics and issues of concern for participants.

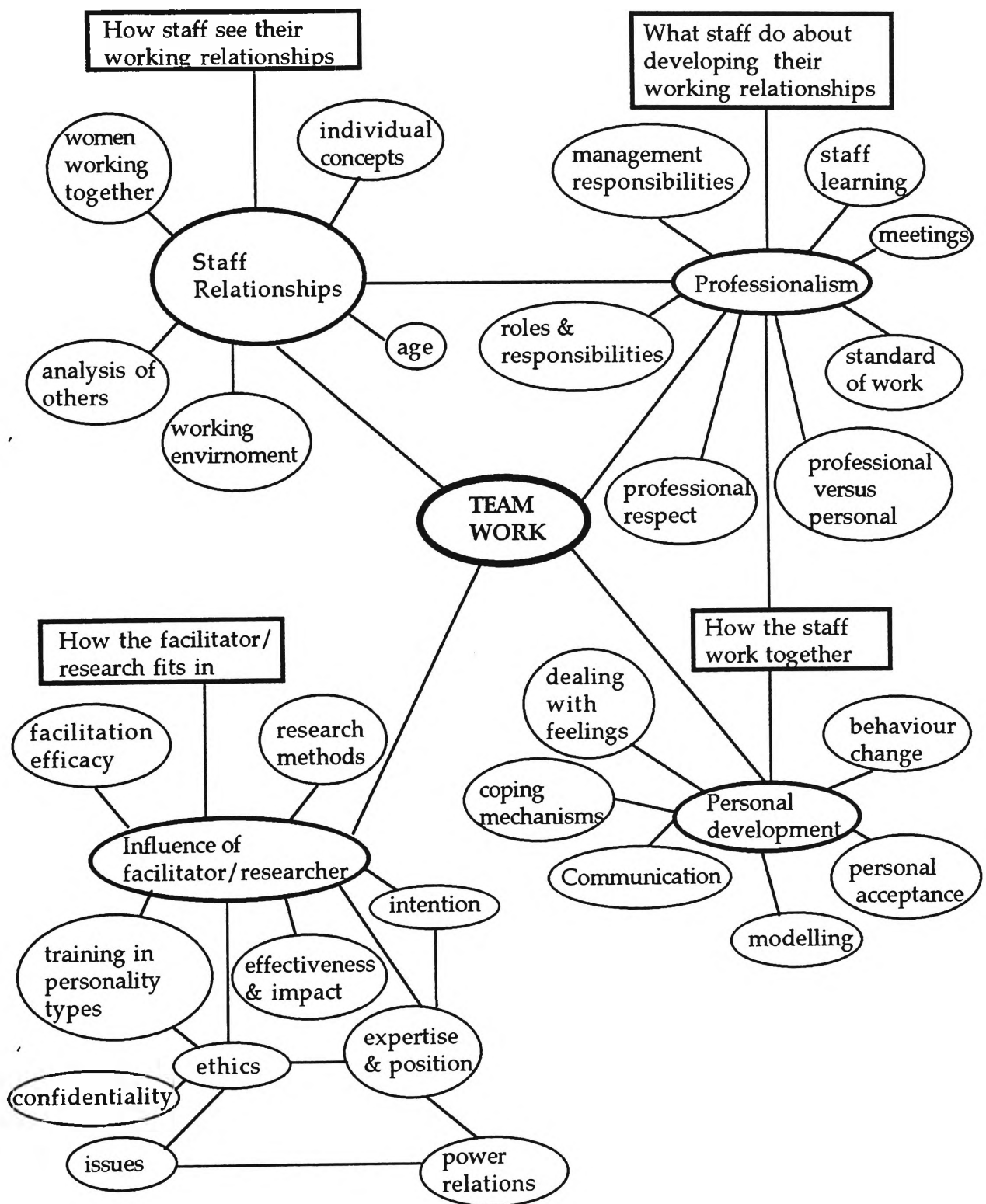


Figure 5.1
Themes of Data Collected

INFLUENCES ON THE LEARNING PROCESS

Endogenous and Exogenous Influences on Facilitated Learning by Staff in the Child Care Setting

There is considerable pressure put on staff who work with the young children in a child care setting to provide high standards of care. This comes from external forces (peers, the parent organisation, state and federal government requirements, parents and, of course, meeting the needs of the children) and internally from the individuals' own desire to achieve high quality professional standards. This latter point was obvious from my observations of the way in which the staff went about their planning and approached their work. They approached the formal learning and research processes in the same enthusiastic, professional manner. They lamented the fact that trainees in child care at university or TAFE are not trained to work as part of a team: "There needs to be [formal learning] in this, to understand themselves and each other, even just the basics" (Bev, 19.10.95).

At the time of this study, the Centre was undergoing assessment through the National Accreditation Program, a program conducted across Australia in all child care centres. The requirements for registration were rigorous, and I observed on several occasions how hard the staff worked to meet the standards. The formal evaluation of the Centre took place during the time of this study, and the Centre gained an 'excellent' rating, which is the highest category attainable.

The emphasis put on staff learning by the parent organisation, the national body and the Centre itself, alongside the encouragement provided by the Director, provided an atmosphere of acceptance of the formal learning

undertaken by the staff involved as part of this study. They all attended the facilitated sessions (apart from reasons of illness), and each staff member participated actively, sharing their thoughts in the activities and discussions that I introduced. Their interactive discourse with each other in the sessions and their questions and responses to my input were relevant and contributed to the overall substance of the sessions.

The Centre had a policy to involve staff in formal learning processes on a regular basis, inviting facilitators to conduct internal courses or having staff attend in-service courses conducted outside the Centre. This included involvement in active learning in many areas. An acknowledged expectation existed that staff would participate in facilitated learning as a normal part of their work.

The Influence of the Facilitator/Researcher

As a presenter and researcher of this formal learning opportunity in team development in the workplace, I became part of the process of the team's ongoing development. From the perspective of the research, the interactions I had with the staff had an impact on the results of this study. Findings of a study exist precisely because there is an interaction between observer and observed that creates what emerges from the inquiry (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). I was a 'stranger' who was seen by staff members as an 'expert'. There is a great deal written in the literature about the interrelationship between the researcher and the researched (Broeschke, 1988; Chandler, 1992; Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Schoen, 1991; Schratz & Walker, 1995; Smith, 1991; and Strauss & Corbin, 1985, 1989). In my study, this was compounded by the fact that I was also a facilitator and so influenced the outcome of the research in a very direct way (Senge, 1993).

In part, because I was a regular 'visitor' to the Centre, the staff began to relate to me as a person with whom they could talk and be heard. They often approached me with personal comments and brought me in as part of their social and professional lives at work. My association with the staff at the Centre developed into, what I felt to be, a friendly, open relationship. I felt part of the group as I was brought into group and individual dialogue about issues unrelated to the thesis. For example they talked of their health issues or about social outings they had been on.

As the facilitator/researcher, I affected the process in this study. The extended nature of my relationship with the staff would have had an effect on their perceptions, interactions and reactions to each other. This would be different in an isolated learning situation, where the facilitator's relationships with the participants is limited. The results of this study do not show what happens when people are left without follow-up support after a one-off learning exercise, which is most often the case in workplace learning situations and has often been my experience as a facilitator in the past. Comments were made on the role I had played in the process of development of the team: "You coming here has helped. [Some staff] have taken a lot of what you said and are using it. . . I've used my discussion with you to be more like letting off steam about how I feel" (Mary, 10.6.95).

One of my concerns about a facilitator being seen as the 'expert' is that those who do not see themselves as knowing as much may accept what the facilitator says as absolute truth. This was demonstrated to me when the staff member who had physically moved herself from one quadrant of the D.I.S.C. to another during the D.I.S.C. exercise, commented that during the session I had said that it was useful to have a balance in personalities in the team. "So, I thought about that and felt better" [that she was the only

person in this category, and it was better for a team to have a balance of personality types (Belinda, 6.6.95). Another member had said that she used me as a “counsellor” to talk about her problems and concerns.

One staff member, who said she was usually uncomfortable doing personal development workshops, responded to my question about whether she was uncomfortable with the exercises we had undertaken with the response: “No. It hasn’t gone past uncomfortable. If you were a different person or pushed me more, then that’d be going past the point. I’d be really really uncomfortable. But you’re not. You make it bearable. There’s been no pressure. I haven’t been singled out. That’s fine. There’s not a finger pointing at me to make me say anything” (Jenny, 7.8.95). This is an important point of which a facilitator needs to be aware: discomfort is felt by some people when taking part in personal development processes with peers. There is a consequent need for facilitators to be sensitive to the feelings of participants. When participants feel relaxed and safe in facilitated exercises, they are more likely to share to the extent that they feel comfortable, which appeared to be the case in these facilitated exercises (and in the interviews and other interactions that followed the facilitation). The role of the facilitator/researcher is a complex one, requiring extremely sensitive handling and awareness of the needs and rights of participants.

The Effect of the Methods of Facilitation Used

The one-hour time frame and the resource constraints on the facilitation limited the work that I could do with the group and the length and depth of deliberations. I was also aware of their physical tiredness at the end of a working day, so I was conscious not to take more time than had been allocated to the sessions. The lack of space was limiting; when tasks were given to them to work in pairs, it seemed difficult for them to stay focused because of their close proximity to each other.

However, I was most encouraged by their level of participation in all the exercises, as shown through their verbal sharing and physical involvement in the exercises and the interest they showed in discussing issues of concern and relevance. Their level of acceptance of the material, and of me as a facilitator/researcher, was also encouraging: "It [the facilitation] has been really helpful" Nancy (9.9.95). While this was a most positive aspect of the facilitation, it also created the need for my particular awareness of ethical concerns. Blind faith in a facilitator without critical or reflective thinking can be hazardous.

My use of 'butcher's' paper to write up their contributions gave the participants the opportunity to see their own thoughts in writing, giving their perceptions and ideas added credibility. It also provided a ready reference for information, providing an opportunity for recall during the session and afterwards. Some of these 'flip-charts' were kept between sessions and put on the notice board in the staff room. The process of writing, using many different coloured pens, also added variety to the presentation. The range of processes introduced into the facilitation was important in providing learning tools to suit the different learning styles.

For instance, personal reflection time, participatory exercises, brainstorming, role playing, hand-outs, sharing knowledge and experiences, relating personal stories and working in pairs, were techniques used to keep interest at its height.

As indicated earlier, during the facilitated sessions, I constantly provided feedback to the staff on their contributions through affirmations of their statements, additional information, clarification through questioning or explanation, acknowledgment and acceptance of their input, reinforcement of ideas or statements and a use of a level of empathy where appropriate. Each of the three sessions were linked to the others through discussion of their relevance and referral back to earlier sessions and points that had been raised at these times.

PARTICIPATION AND PERSPECTIVES

Reflective Thinking

The staff's enthusiasm for participating in the formal learning process provided an atmosphere conducive to reflection and learning. As they deliberated on their work practices and relationships in the workplace during and after the sessions, through the research process (particularly in the interviews), critical and reflective thinking became an important component of their learning process. There were indications that the process of facilitated learning with the added component of the research had the effect of creating an environment for critical thinking about the workplace and working relationships. Referring to the transcript of her interview, one staff member responded: "When I got it (the transcript) back, I thought: 'that's not how I felt or what I said.' [Then I realised that] this is what came from within. It was really beneficial to me. It made me reflect" (Susan, 9.9.96). Staff reflected on their own personal constructions of how they viewed situations, with one staff member commenting: "The way I view the Centre is from my own frame of reference, which is different for everyone else" (Mary, 13.6.95). When I returned to the Centre almost twelve months later and the staff had the opportunity to read the chapter from this thesis on the D.I.S.C. exercise, one staff member said that reading it had helped her "reflect on what was happening with [staff relationships] again" (Susan, 9.9.96).

Staff Participation in the Formal Learning Sessions and Research Process

The involvement of the participants in the formal learning and research processes undertaken during the course of this study demonstrated their general interest and willingness to improve their working relationships. Through comments in both formal and casual situations, they indicated their desire for change in personal workplace practices.

There was a high level of interaction and listening to each other in the sessions with much agreement and acknowledgment of others' feelings. They discussed each person's position in the D.I.S.C. and new insights into some staff members. There were also disagreements on certain points, such as roles and responsibilities of some staff members. Ideas were freely given when asked for and, at no time during the facilitation, was there a shortage of participation by staff members, as they readily joined in the discussions and exchanged views with me and with each other.

Staff were given pre- and post-facilitation reading material to reinforce learning and understanding. From the comments made by some members at interviews, it was clear that these had not been read widely. They had been placed in their professional folders to refer to "later when I've got time to read them." Others indicated that they had read the material when they talked about the content of the hand-outs in the interviews. This difference in utilisation of resources can be related to many factors, one of which could

be personality type and the ways people prefer to learn. It could also be influenced by time or interest factors.

When I was arranging to come back to reinterview staff members, they were open to my being there at any time, as long as it fitted in with their work and the Centre's needs. It was suggested that I talk with some of them when the children were present. This was attempted and was not at all successful as staff are much too busy during session times. Staff commented that they would have liked to give me more information but found it time consuming and felt guilty that they could not spend more time talking to me when I was there during session times. The time they gave me for interviews was in their own time, either during work breaks or before or after work.

The staff's interest in the research process was shown by their request to be able to read through the thesis before it was submitted ("as long as it is not too long!") As draft chapters of the thesis were given to the staff to read, all said they had read them to varying degrees of thoroughness. Comments were made about the work: "It was very detailed. How did you find time to do all that reading?" (Susan, 9.9.96). "I read it all and it looks good to me" (Mary, 1.9.96).

The ancillary staff (except for the administrator) declined to participate in the formal learning processes, seeing themselves as separate to the other staff. This was an interesting decision because it delineated those who felt part of the 'team' and those who did not, and perhaps it indicates their sense of their own place as outside the 'main' function of the Centre, in their own eyes. Towards the end of this research project, I mentioned to the cook (one of those who had declined to be directly involved in this research and

of their own place as outside the 'main' function of the Centre, in their own eyes. Towards the end of this research project, I mentioned to the cook (one of those who had declined to be directly involved in this research and facilitated learning) that I would like to mention her role in the Centre, and she was quite happy for me to do this. Following her reading of my sections on her role, and other sections of the thesis that I had given the staff to read, she was very willing to talk with me about how she saw herself as part of the 'team'.

The Director's Perspective on Staff Learning and Development

The Director attended staff development outside the Centre whenever it was possible and appropriate. She also encouraged other staff to attend staff development programs and used staff meetings to introduce informal learning in areas such as curriculum development and planning. I observed, during my attendance at these meetings, that they were taken seriously by the staff, who recognised the desire of the Director for them to participate fully in order to enhance their level of knowledge and approach to child care in a highly professional way. This was demonstrated on one occasion, when the Director had given the staff forms to fill in to outline details of their ideas on what they could do in specific situations that might occur in the Centre. They had all completed these forms before the staff meeting in which they were to be discussed.

The Director had a particular interest in personal and team development learning. She recognised that the team was "working o.k." and also saw there was always "room for improvement." She was aware of tensions between peers and wanted to address these in their early stages rather than

situation, enabled her to provide the staff with the opportunity to deal with issues that arose. She did indicate, however, that she was sometimes reluctant to get involved in their personal concerns. By holding a personal development course, an opportunity was created to bring some of those issues out in the open and have them talked about in the relatively safe situation of a group discussion, utilising the skills of an independent, 'expert' facilitator to handle delicate topics.

Following the facilitated sessions with the staff at the Centre, the Director indicated that she had gained insights into "seeing how they [the staff] all fit together and why they do things the way they do." She was a full participant in the formal learning processes and research process along with the other staff. She attended all the facilitated sessions and took part in the interview and review processes.

Staff Perspectives on Personal Development Learning Facilitation

From the perspective of the Assistant Director, who was also involved in the entire process, "some staff had shown more interest in the [formal learning processes] than others" (Kate 29.6.95). This was also supported in my observations in the interviews when some staff talked in detail about the process and what they had learnt and how they were using it, while others were less able to discuss their impressions of the sessions. This may have been because some staff members were more articulate than others. There was some scepticism expressed by two staff members about the overall value of the sessions in team building and its effect on the team: "It [the D.I.S.C.] was short and a bit shallow. The effectiveness depends on the people and the circumstances" (Mary 29.6.95). "Have we been doing team building?" [referring to the personal development sessions] (Karla 29.6.95).

The Effects of the Formal Learning Process on Team Interaction and Development

During the interviews following the formal learning sessions, some staff members commented that things had changed since they had been involved in the personal development exercises. They were aware of the limitations of change that can take place in facilitations of this sort over a short period of time. Most considered that facilitated personal development makes a difference "to a point" (Mary, 7.8.95) because people are more aware of each other and their personalities. It was recognised that the influence would vary among individual staff members. One staff member commented that it would have an effect on "some people and not others" and that "perhaps in the long term it would make a difference to them" (Nancy, 13.7.95).

There was an understanding by all the staff interviewed of the boundaries and limitations of the exercises and their application in the workplace. It was seen by one staff member as "just a beginning" and another saw it as "another step" toward being able to work as a team. Some were sceptical about the effects. One staff member reflected that she was "not sure that it had any effect [although she] enjoyed it" (Mary, 26.6.96). She showed an understanding of the need for this type of learning to be much longer and more in-depth for it: "to make real differences . . . if we did something for a solid week . . . it would have more benefits for the team, but that's just impractical" (Mary, 26.6.96).

While there was a great deal of interest shown in the exercises, one of the staff members indicated that she thought it had little impact stating that [the

staff] "have not talked about it [the D.I.S.C. exercise] since the workshop session [a week after the exercise]" (Mary, 29.6.95). Others qualified their appraisal of the exercise: "The effectiveness of the D.I.S.C. depends on the individuals and circumstances" (Mary, 3.7.95). One staff member had mixed feelings about its effect: "It was helpful to a degree of basic awareness. I thought it was interesting. It only just skimmed the surface. I thought it was excellent. It was put in black and white; the way people are caught up in their own personalities, it is hard to see others' personalities. Only basic awareness can be expected from one hour." and "It's not cut and dry. Circumstances force you to be someone" (Nancy, 13.7.95). Here, she was indicating her perception that people change their behaviour according to the circumstances at any given time, using a reflective process as she weighed up the pros and cons of the formal learning exercise.

Along with the reservations shown by some of the staff, in the interviews that followed the D.I.S.C. exercise, they all expressed the view that it had positive value and had affected how they saw themselves and others. They were making concrete the outcomes, recognising aspects of each other that they had previously not considered: "I got to know that someone really was sensitive, which I didn't look at before" (Bev, 2.9.95). This statement indicated that this staff member was acknowledging aspects of another staff member's personality in a new light. Other staff members commented that "It gave others a different view of each other. It gave me insight into others" (Nancy, 13.7.95). Another stated that "It has made us aware of each other a bit more. It has helped me to get to know the others" (Bev, 2.9.95).

There was acknowledgment that in doing the exercise, there had been changes in personal relations amongst the staff: "We are listening to each other a bit more since the D.I.S.C." (Belinda, 31.6.95). There was also a

recognition that there were some conflicts that had not been raised openly until the exercise had taken place: "It was good to open up some difficult things" (Nancy, 13.7.95). When I returned to the Centre to collect the comments from the staff on the chapter describing the exercises, one staff member commented to me that she was "able to handle differences with other staff members better [since the D.I.S.C.] because she understood them more" (Susan, 9.9.96).

Staff told me that they did not perceive that there were any negative consequences of undertaking the D.I.S.C. exercise. There were reservations about doing any further personal development exercises. One staff member stated: "It's been very insightful, but as far as taking the initiative to go further, I wouldn't just come forward and ask for it" (Karla, 7.8.95).

One staff member who had changed her position in the exercise from one personality type to another commented to me, that immediately after the D.I.S.C. exercise, she felt "really awful" (Belinda, 31.6.95) because she did not want to be the way she was. By the next morning, she had decided that she was comfortable with who she was and had decided to "bring it out in the open." The learning she had experienced had given her the opportunity to reflect on her behaviour and its effect on her working relationships, and she had decided to take action on that reflection.

I had been concerned about the vulnerability that her openness in the facilitated session might have generated and wondered if she had been negatively affected by her experience. It seemed to be a significant realisation and admission for her to make in the presence of her peers, particularly as she was a relatively new member of staff. I felt some responsibility, as the facilitator, to follow the incident through. The day

following this session of the facilitated exercise, I contacted the Director to ask her if I could speak to the staff member concerned. I arranged to have coffee with her the next day so that we could talk about what had happened at the facilitated session. She said she was very pleased to be able to meet with me. She expressed how much she had learned from the exercise and how pleased she was that she had participated because she could look at herself in a way in which she felt comfortable. She said she felt that it had clarified some of the reasons for her way of behaving at work.

One staff member began her interview by asking me a question: "Have we been doing any team building?" She did not see that what we had done in the formal learning sessions was related to building the team. This has important implications for facilitation in relation to team building in consideration of whether it is necessary to bring the attention of the group to the effect the learning could have on the group working together.

The team building process through the facilitated learning sessions in personal development was well received by the staff as a whole with some reservations about its effect on the team's progress. It had varying impacts on individuals while generally raising the levels of critical thinking amongst the team in regard to their relationships with each other. They were aware of the possibilities of such an exercise process on their team development and indicated that they realised its value within their team.

STAFF ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Staff Perceptions of Themselves and Other Staff

During the interviews, there were comments on the perception people had

of themselves and the images they portrayed to the group: "It has made me look at myself and how I interact. It has made me aware of my input and impression on others, in a positive way" (Belinda, 9.9.95). An understanding of others behaviour was indicated when one staff member commented that she was "becoming aware of some of the masks that we wear; they can be very impeding on our real personalities and who we really are to a lot of people; for protection, mostly" (Bev, 2.9.95).

Judgments were also made of how others portrayed themselves: "I didn't totally agree with what [others] thought about themselves" (Nancy, 13.7.95). Nancy also indicated that she was attempting to understand why this happened: "It's hard to be totally honest with everybody. You don't want to show all your inner self to everybody. Some people have masks that they do not let you get below the surface. Some people are not even sure themselves." This indicated that there is a sense that other staff are not being entirely open in their disclosures about themselves or about how or why they behave as they do. This could suggest a sense of distrust among some staff members.

Specific Roles and Responsibilities

Many comments were made by staff in the interviews on staff roles and responsibilities. There was an awareness, if not acceptance, of the differences in duties and obligations. Some staff members commented that there was a lack of appreciation by some staff members for the work they performed and some questioning of the importance of tasks undertaken by others. "Everyone knows what their job is and they do it, although it may be questioned." (Karla, 7.8.95) "Even though we have similar jobs, the roles are different. . . There is some sarcasm from other staff for the different

roles, showing lack of appreciation for some roles by others" (Mary, 10.6.95).

The Interrelatedness Between Personal and Professional Roles

The link between personal and professional roles was also often raised by the staff during the interviews. Most felt that it was difficult, if not impossible, to separate work and personal lives. Some saw that the way they behaved at work was part of their personality and behaviour, which they perceived as difficult to change: "I can't separate it [personal and professional life] I'm afraid. Is that part of my [personality]?" (Karla, 7.8.95)

Others saw that they could separate the two parts of their lives and "go home and forget it" (Kate, 29.6.95). There was a concern expressed by one staff member that it was "unprofessional" to let personal feelings have an impact on work. Other statements made in the interviews stressed the separation of work and personal issues: "It's hard because it's a personality thing. How do you go about changing it at work, so it's a professional thing. . . I know others take work [issues] home and it affects them a lot of the time. . . It's not just work, its personal, even though it's at the workplace" (Kate, 29.6.95). "I treat work as work and home as home" (Mandy, 11.8.95).

One staff member related considerations of personal and professional roles to the facilitated learning exercises, questioning the difference between social and professional team building. She was alluding to the fact that she considered the work being done with the facilitated learning in relation to team building was probably having more of an impact on the social team building than the 'on-the-job' working relationships. She saw a distinct separation between the two spheres. It is important to consider this perspective. Facilitated learning, to be effective, needs to be included as part of an overall approach to change, otherwise it will address only one aspect

of the workplace and probably make little difference. It is also relevant to consider that any changes a person makes to their behaviour in one sphere of their lives will probably flow on to other areas.

Professional Support

An additional interview to those planned was requested by a staff member who asked me if she could talk with me about some ideas she had that had sprung from the facilitated learning sessions. When we met, she outlined one of her ideas. The idea was that the staff needed professional support from an external, independent person who would act as a sounding board and outlet for their "most pressing", current concerns; not as a counsellor, but as someone with whom they could share their workplace concerns, knowing that it would "not necessarily go any further. I don't want any counselling back. I just want to tell someone how I feel. Sometimes I feel I've just got to say it to someone and then I can go back and get on with it" (Bev, 9.9.95).

This idea was later taken up by other staff members at a staff meeting that had been set aside to discuss the research. There was general, enthusiastic agreement by the staff on this idea, and much discussion followed. It was seen as a way to provide a "release valve", to allow them to "get back on track." It was envisaged that this person would be available at any time and could be used across the organisation at other centres: "It would not be in an advisory role and it could include a personal development/conflict resolution [teaching] role - [teaching] people how to work together. . . . You need to have someone to talk with" (Bev, 19.10.95). ". . . someone who is detached. So you know there won't be any repercussions for the person" (Karla, 9.9.95). "It's such a great benefit to have someone to just blurt

everything out to. Not give you any reason for feeling that way" (Mandy, 9.9.95). "... just that you had an hour with someone as a sounding board" (Bev, 9.9.95). "You could see the benefits it from it. They're huge" (Mandy, 9.9.95). "That would help the people too who keep things bottled up and think that its a personal thing and I shouldn't share it with somebody; it's my own problem. You could say how you feel and that is it. You don't have to worry about offending anybody" (Belinda, 9.9.95).

This awareness of the need for professional support from a detached person was a matter of general consensus by the staff members. They recognised that it would support their efforts to work as a team. It would provide an outlet for their concerns that would not impact negatively on their relationships within the team or have further implications for themselves as part of the team.

This expression by the staff of their perceived need for ongoing professional support related to their ability to work together as an effective professional group. They saw it as providing an opportunity to release workplace tensions that could affect how they worked together.

In many of my facilitation experiences in workplaces this concept has been widely mentioned. It appears that there is often a need for staff to have the opportunity to voice their concerns without fear of repercussions.

TEAMS

Comments were made in interviews about the need to be able to work in a team (which is one of the staff selection criteria emphasised by the parent organisation). The interviews showed that individual staff members had

concepts of what a team was and how it would function best: "Team-work is a big thing, and at the same time everyone has their own function. We have to have some separate roles. . . We have to get along as a team" (Kate, 29.6.95). The attributes perceived to contribute to functioning well in a team varied. Individual team members' needs and expectations of how they would like their working group to function were based on individual and group experiences and perceptions. The staff commented that it was important that workers get along on a personal and professional level and work cooperatively with one another, being flexible in the course of changes, and respecting each other as individuals. A sense of humour with "lots of laughs" was seen as a key ingredient.

The word 'team' developed a new meaning for me as I observed staff interactions and talked with them about how the group functioned. The 'team' was not just the staff who worked together in this Centre. The individuals in the group are part of a aggregate that includes outsiders. The definition of a team that the staff arrived at in a staff meeting toward the end of the data collection was:

"People who work together for a common goal, supporting one another in achieving high standards in meeting the main goal."

Although the staff at the Centre agreed on these images of a team, there were situations where this approach was not obvious. For example, I have one image of the cook in the Centre being a one-person 'team'. She was multi-skilled and worked mostly alone in her planning and preparation. She shopped, cooked, cleaned, planned menus, organised the kitchen area, served meals, evaluated and was solely in charge of the activities in this part of the Centre. Her roles were those that a group of people would normally take on. She was a pivotal point for the Centre. She coordinated

her activities to suit the program and related closely with the staff and parents. She was part of the rest of the 'team' and at the same time she somehow appeared as a 'team' on her own.

Formal Learning as Part of Team Building

The staff made comments that indicated that they saw formal learning in the area of personal development and team building as part of a process.

"I think the personal [learning] does help with team building - don't ask me how. It works. It seems to make you, as an individual, understand what other people's personalities may be like because I might have judged them in a really different way. When you understand their personality, you learn to cope with them and deal with them as part of the team, as a team member" (Mandy, 9.9.95).

"As far as the team goes, I think that if, after everyone has got all the personal stuff off their chest . . . we could somehow get that open communication going so that we share some of those feelings with each other and work through and beyond those" (Mary, 9.9.95).

"It would be very interesting for everybody who is working in a team, especially in child care I suppose, to have workshops with you in what we started with - all about the personality traits and how you build a team. That'd be very interesting but I don't know how you go doing a long-term thing. I can't see that far ahead" (Susan, 9.9.95).

At staff meetings, the team talked positively about how well they worked together, with some minor qualifications about how things sometimes go

wrong. This was said in a way that accepted that disagreements were normal, to be expected and “not a big deal”. That was very different to what some staff members had said in private interviews days earlier. While there were comments in the interviews about the general cooperativeness of the staff - “On the whole [we] get on well” (Karla, 7.8.95). There were other comments such as “Child care has fallen down because of [lack of] teamwork.” This was justified in the statement in an interview that: “We go in cycles. We’ll all be so happy and work so well as a team sometimes.” This indicates the usual movement in relationships in a group situation, where there is an ebb and flow of interactions between group members. There is also the possibility that perhaps there may be anxiety at the Centre concerning being personally open for fear of repercussions or of bringing up issues that are difficult to handle in a close working group.

Senge (1993), Avery (1990), Olsen and Johnson (1991), Rotter (1966) and Helmes (1986) all comment on this common phenomenon of group behaviour differing from what individuals say they do. It is part of a process of providing different people with different views of themselves, all of which are valid and real to them. Many factors influence, consciously or unconsciously, how people react or respond in group situations. Societal expectations and avoidance of disapproval are two clear motives (Dahlstrom, 1973; Deaux, 1995). Behaviour of this nature occurs as a reaction to the group situation rather than from a personal desire to manipulate or distort facts (Batson, 1995). Group members often have different views of situations and of each other. When they can provide different views for each other, they can enter a crucial first stage in being able to work on conflicts and misunderstandings (Brookfield, 1988).

ISSUES, CONCERNS AND CLAIMS SUMMARISED

From the analysis of the interviews, as discussed in the preceding sections, tables of issues, concerns and claims (Tables 5.2, 5.3 & 5.4) were formulated (as suggested by Guba & Lincoln, 1989) in order to aggregate and summarise the data gathered to provide the 'big picture'. The term 'issues' in this context refers to matters accepted as facts. They are not contentious and do not indicate problems. The term 'concerns' refers to matters that are causing some apprehension. The term 'claims' refers to assertions that have been made about particular topics.

Staff's Perceptions of the Dynamics Within Their Team

ISSUES	CONCERNS	CLAIMS
How do we keep working well as a team?	There are some clashes of personality [which affect how the team works together].	We work well as a team most of the time.
Openness and communication help build teams.	There is a lack of communication sometimes.	We are learning to understand each other more and therefore build cohesion in the team [since the team facilitation process].
Respect is part of being in a team.	Knowing how much to trust others is sometimes a problem.	How the team works together affects the children.
The team is made up of individuals with different needs and personalities.	Expectations of each other are sometimes unrealistic.	
The team changes.	It's not easy for newcomers to be made part of the team.	Staff leave for better jobs or to have babies.
The Director's role is a very responsible one.	How do we bring new staff into what we have already learned?	
	Different roles and responsibilities are not always understood.	The Director makes a difference to team work.
There is a need for more learning opportunities in team work	There is a lack of pre-service [learning] in team work.	There is no pre service [learning] in team work.
Women working together makes a different dynamic.	Difficulties that continue can get people down.	Personal and professional lives are separate for some and not for others.
Everyone is not always happy at work and it can get boring.	It's hard to be objective in the work situation.	

Table 5.1

Issues, Concerns and Claims of Staff Correlated from Individual and Group Interviews in Relation to Team Interactions and Developments

Table (5.1) indicates how the staff at the Centre perceived the dynamics that occurred within their team and the concepts they had of how the team worked together. Staff showed an interest in how they could make the team function "well" and what that involved. They claimed that they needed to understand each other to be able to work more effectively

together and that how they worked together affected the children in their care. They were well aware of the importance of the role of the Director in team building. There was a clear acknowledgment that there was a need for opportunities for formal learning in team development because it was not provided in pre-service courses.

Staff's Perceptions of Personal Development (PD) Learning Exercises

ISSUES	CONCERNS	CLAIMS
<p>PD [facilitation] leads to analysis of self and others.</p>	<p>PD [facilitation] is useful, but unsure of what difference it makes to team building ie its value therefore, what's the point?</p> <p>Not enough time or over long enough time span to make real changes.</p>	<p>PD [facilitation] helps growth and learn about self and others and relating to others.</p> <p>PD [facilitation] is valuable and helps with team building.</p> <p>The staff are learning new ways of doing things.</p> <p>PD [facilitation] helps individuals recognise their behaviours and so work to change what they do.</p> <p>People remembered the D.I.S.C. model and where they and others were.</p>
<p>The [facilitation] is only the start of learning</p> <p>The [learning] was shallow. It needs more work and there is much more to learn.</p> <p>D.I.S.C. was not seen as team building [by some].</p> <p>Each person has their own way of dealing with their concerns.</p>	<p>Fear of revealing too much of self in PD [facilitation] sessions.</p> <p>Confidentiality.</p>	<p>[The facilitation] opened up some difficult situations.</p> <p>This then leads to being able to deal with them.</p>

Table 5.2

Issues, Concerns and Claims of Staff Collected from Individual and Group Interviews in Relation to Personal Development Facilitation at Work

Table 5.2 demonstrates the staff's understanding of the impact on the team's personal development through learning exercises in which they participated. They illustrated that they were aware of the limited impact

that learning exercises in personal development can have over a short period of time. They were also aware of some of the aspects that needed care in these exercises, such as confidentiality and revealing too much of themselves in front of their peers. They considered that they had gained positively from the exercises in being able to recognise their own and others' ways of behaving at work. There was indication of a recognition that when difficult situations are brought to the surface, they can be dealt with. This can be seen to have been gained as a direct result of the facilitation.

Staff's Perceptions of the Research and the Researcher

RESEARCH		
ISSUES	CONCERNS	CLAIMS
<p>Understanding what the research is about.</p> <p>The staff felt that they were part of the research.</p>	<p>Not knowing what is happening or going to happen with the results.</p> <p>-----</p> <p>What next? [after the research process is completed]</p>	<p>It [the research] will show us [the staff] something new that we can do to improve things in the team.</p>
BEING RESEARCHED		
<p>I [as a staff member] am being interviewed and observed as part of the research.</p> <p>What I [staff members] say is written down or taped.</p>	<p>Am I saying the right thing?</p> <p>There may be repercussions from what I am saying.</p> <p>Feeling inadequate to answer the questions being put.</p> <p>-----</p> <p>Confidentiality</p> <p>-----</p> <p>Giving personal time.</p>	<p>[The research process] provided an opportunity for individuals to air their views.</p>
FACILITATOR/RESEARCHER		
<p>The facilitator/researcher is in our centre.</p> <p>She conducts PD sessions with the staff.</p> <p>She interviews all the staff.</p> <p>She talks to the staff on a casual basis in the playroom, kitchen and office at different times.</p>	<p>The facilitator/researcher is not around on a regular basis, and we do not know exactly when she will be around.</p> <p>Not being able to respond to her needs when she is here because of the time frame.</p>	<p>Being listened to is important to staff.</p> <p>Learning has taken place from the facilitator.</p> <p>Staff felt comfortable with the way the sessions were run.</p>

Table 5.4
Issues, Concerns and Claims Of Staff Correlated from Individual and Group Interviews in Relation to Research, Being Researched and the Facilitator/Researcher

In Table 5.4, the research and its impact on the staff have been outlined. The staff showed an understanding of the purpose and process of the research and their part in it. There was some concern shown for the repercussions of what they said in interviews and anxiety about meeting a perceived standard of response to the questions asked. They indicated that they had practical concerns for confidentiality and the use of the findings from the research, in regard to protecting themselves, their peers and the Centre from any possible negative outcomes. This fear was allayed when the staff were able to review the written material for this thesis. They found it acceptable and accurate.

They also saw that the research findings could be useful to them in their work, and that it was not a one-way process where the researcher alone would benefit. The interviews were perceived by the staff as an opportunity to share their thoughts and concerns about the workplace and the facilitation in a non-threatening way. In consideration of the role of the facilitator/researcher in their workplace, the staff mentioned their concerns and also the benefits of having someone detached from the immediate situation with whom they could discuss issues. The opportunity afforded to the staff to have extended access to the facilitator/researcher, provided them with the possibility to form a longer term relationship with her which allowed for greater understanding to develop between them.

PRESENTING THE FINDINGS TO THE STAFF

When the interviews had been analysed and tabled, the findings were shared with the staff at a staff meeting. They were each given a copy, and they listened quietly as I talked through the analysis. There was general agreement amongst the staff on all the points in the 'issues, concerns and claims' document, except one. The one comment that they wanted changed was that staff turnover might slow down if team building was ongoing. This was not seen as a relevant factor. They generally considered that people who had left the Centre had not done so because of any troubles in the team. They had left for new, and better jobs, or "to have babies." I withdrew the statement, and they were then in agreement.

It was initially surprising to me that they agreed so completely with the document overall. There may have been several reasons for this compliance. It could have been due to the nature of my position as a researcher who had analysed what they had said, which they may have felt inadequate to criticise. It could have been a lack of understanding of the analysis. Or it may have been that what had been presented to them were their own opinions and thoughts given back to them in a categorised and organised format. They said that they would use this as the basis of their planning for the following year. This was a most unexpected outcome.

LINKING IT ALL TOGETHER

A useful link is evident between personal development facilitation, intelligences, personalities, work environments and management styles. Each of these domains refers to people working together, endogenous and exogenous influences, and using personal skills and awareness of other people and situations to achieve common goals. These are all part of the experiences that influence a team. This is, in essence, how I see workgroups - as part of a system. It is essential that all parts of a system be viewed together to achieve useful outcomes.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

In this chapter, I have attempted to bring together various aspects of formal learning and research that affect a work group and assess the impact that my role as a facilitator/researcher had on the process.

The evidence gained from the interviews and other interactions with staff, alongside the review of literature, indicate that there is a level of benefit to be gained in the use of formal learning in personal development as part of an ongoing and multi-faceted approach to team building in a workplace. The data highlight the importance of the development of the relationship between the participants and the facilitator/researcher and how the dual roles combined to assist the staff to participate in reflective thinking about formal learning and workplace relationships.

The support (explicit and implicit) given to personal development facilitation in the workplace by the Director and the organisation

encouraged the staff and myself as the facilitator/researcher. This encouragement helped to support and reinforce the attitudes of the staff toward learning in the realm of personal development as part of the formation of their working relationships.

The staff members were observed to take on the group persona of a learning culture. Participants described the process as challenging and as requiring reflection in both the facilitation and the research process.

The position taken in the facilitation that there were no right or wrong answers, and that everyone's opinions and ideas were valued, set the tone for the learning and development that took place. This provided participants with the opportunity to develop their own personal beliefs and ideas. It created an atmosphere for empowerment through the development of mutual acceptance by staff and facilitator.

As a consequence of the analysis of the data, a grounded theory of staff development began to emerge. An explication of this grounded theory is the major focus of the following, and final, chapter of this study. It will introduce conclusions I have taken from the results to make some statements about factors that have an effect on team building when it involves facilitation in a research situation. I have indicated some possible future directions for organisations and facilitators to consider in planning and implementing experiential learning facilitation in team development in workplaces.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

We evaluate the success of research by the nature of the new questions that can be asked and not answered.

Schratz and Walker, 1995

INTRODUCTION

My intention in this study was to provide a useful document for those interested in the process of team development using a facilitated learning process. The study developed into a much broader look at the development of working groups within a wider organisational system. The study and its findings are particularly relevant to the management of organisations engaged in early childhood education and care.

The study site, a child care centre (the Centre), proved well suited to constructivist inquiry methods. Theory emerged from practical observations from the worksite and evolved from the analysis of events, interviews and ongoing deliberations at the Centre. This active approach included taking into account the personal and professional implications for the participants and the facilitator/researcher. The staff at the Centre took an active role in critiquing the findings of this thesis, which resulted in the theory having a firmer sense of authenticity.

The findings from this study appear, in many ways, broadly adaptable to other organisations in a variety of working contexts. General factors about the place of professional support, systems thinking, critical and reflective thinking, facilitation, experiential and sustained learning opportunities for staff, and team learning as part of team development echo literature, experience, and anecdotal evidence at other worksites. Other prevailing factors that seem broadly applicable include worker involvement, flexibility and an understanding of the complexity of team building.

The Emergence of a Theory on Team Development and Formal Learning

The grounded theory that emerged through the field study in this research is open-ended and forms a series of suggestions that can be followed to address the many issues of formal learning and team development. The various aspects of the theory overlap. They include: assessment, facilitation, experiential learning, reflection, teams, professional support, personalities, personal understanding, relationships, staff involvement and environment effects, which are all encapsulated within a system (as shown in Figure 6.1).

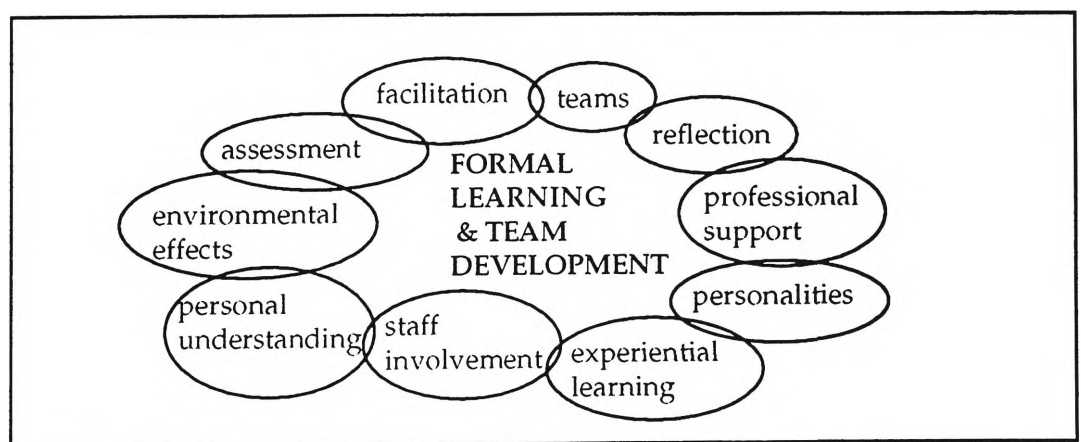


Figure 6.1
The Factors Impinging on Formal Learning Within a Team Development Process
(devised by the author)

Team Development 'Formulas'

There are no simple answers or formulas for team development that can be imparted to organisations to develop effective teams. Each workplace is distinctive and has different needs according to its corporate culture and the individuals working within it and therefore needs to be treated as a discrete environment in order to cater for these differences. It is not possible to create a formula that will suit all organisations in their efforts toward building effective teams.

The Nature of 'Teams'

When the word 'team' is used in a workplace setting, it usually evokes a clear-cut, fixed image of a group of people working closely together with a common purpose, rather than a descriptive representation of a flexible and expansive group. The accepted definitions may actually be deceptive, and even destructive, because they over-simplify complex situations. This could lead to expectations of simple solutions to extremely diverse and complex situations. Simple solutions to team development deny the impact of all the endogenous and exogenous influences that impact on 'team' dynamics. Many people regularly enter and leave a team. They bring with them varying issues and agendas, values and beliefs, that add to (or take from) the energy of the group. They also add varying levels of knowledge and skills that influence relationships within the team.

The findings of the study resonate with my experience in that the team I observed acts like a working organism that varies according to its moment-by-moment composition and is influenced by a wide variety of endogenous

and exogenous factors. It is not a clearly defined entity that can be boxed and analysed according to its membership at any one time. It changes according to when it is defined, where it is happening, who is involved (internally and externally), how it is happening, what is happening, what is expected to happen, how it is created, and what constructs are put on it.

Teams are not necessarily whole entities that amalgamate to make up a fraternity. They can be made up of constantly changing sets of individuals, situations, activities, times and places. They may not all be working together as a group at any one time. They are the aggregate of individuals who are connected in time and space, either substantially or tenuously. They are the one linked to the many, immediately or widely dispersed.

Factors that Affect Teams

There are many variables that affect teams. One of the most important of these variables is the people who work within the organisation - their personalities, individual and collective intelligences, professional backgrounds and experiences, and the relationships developed between them. In this study it was clear through comments made by staff members that their relationships with other staff members played a major role in their perceptions about how the team functioned. This factor of relationships arose as the most commonly mentioned element in the interviews I conducted with the staff. Another important factor, as mentioned earlier in this thesis, is the staff's perceptions of the Director and her style of management. Staff members commented on several occasions about her leadership style and how this affected how the group worked together.

Other influences on how the group worked together include historical factors such as the level of experience of the staff and the time they had spent at the Centre, along with past experiences and events. The type of work undertaken also has an effect on team development. As previously mentioned, the nature of the work at the Centre is, at times, quite intense and involves the staff in close emotional encounters with each other. This affects relationships and the way the group works together.

Professional support from peers, managers and other organisations also plays a role in the creation of the atmosphere in a workplace. Because of the nature of their work, the staff members at the Centre were often observed to be supporting each other in their professional roles through their interactions and involvement in day-to-day tasks.

The structure of an organisation and the way the system functions combine to create corporate cultures that affect how individuals behave. The theoretical perspective that general work practices can have a major influence on relationships within a team is supported by the views of Senge (1993), who believes that the structure of an organisation influences the behaviour of the workers within that system. Trist (in Clark, 1991) refers to the relationships being developed within a system in a triad of sub-systems - the informal social system, the formal social system and the technical system. This analysis of workplace systems infers that they overlap and interact with each other to create the overall workplace environment.

Physical surroundings also contribute to the overall atmosphere in a workplace. Clark, (1991) believes that organisations are continually having to adjust and respond to their environment in order to survive. External regulatory pressures provide another influence on how a work group

interacts. As observed in this study, the pressure created from compulsory involvement in the national, government accreditation process created a co-operative atmosphere at the Centre as all staff worked towards achieving a successful result in the assessment.

Often in organisations, when there is a problem within a team, the overall picture of the system and its sub-systems is overlooked and one person is often perceived as being solely responsible for undermining the team's viability. This is rarely the case. Often, responsibility for the perceived problems is placed on an individual rather than the system. On occasions at the Centre, when there were differences of opinion on how a task was to be undertaken, the discordance was sometimes seen as a result of a particular personality. When disharmony occurs in work groups it is usually caused by much more than individual responses or reactions. Personal behaviour is often a reflection of organisational function or dysfunction.

Hence, I have developed a representation of the dynamics within an organisation as an analogy to a rubber tyre inner-tube:

There is a bulge (problem) in the inner-tube (organisation). This bulge is forced or pushed down (the particular problem is dealt with in isolation); and then the inevitable happens. It comes up somewhere else on the tube (as another flaw in relationships). And, every time the bulge emerges and is pushed down it wears the tube away a little more (compacted relationship problems), until there may be a collapse of the tube (organisational crisis).

Team Development Practices

The findings of this study appear to indicate that team development practices encompass a wide variety of considerations. The results suggest that to address the development of teams in a holistic way, taking into account as many of these factors as possible, it is preferable, in the first instance, for a facilitator to conduct an assessment of the workplace conditions and the needs of all those involved with the process of team development. This assessment then remains as a part of a continuing process of monitoring and judging the usefulness of team development strategies. The process is continuous; there is no identifiable end point. In my involvement with the staff members over the two year period in casual conversations, observations and formal interviews and learning situations, I gathered data that allowed me to analyse their needs. These assessed needs then led to the development of facilitation in sequenced experiential learning exercises that involved in-depth consideration of various aspects that, in their perception, affected the development of the team. These included self-esteem, communication skills and roles and responsibilities. As demonstrated through this study, the practice of regular reviews and interaction across all levels within the organisation on an ongoing basis can provide regular opportunities for reflection by staff members, the facilitator and the organisation itself, that is an essential component of team development. The study also showed that the flow of the suggested process of development (as seen in Figure 6.2) is non-linear, that is, development can move to or between any other stage, depending on circumstances. Each stage or action connects with other stages and actions.

Work Plan Outline for Team Development Process

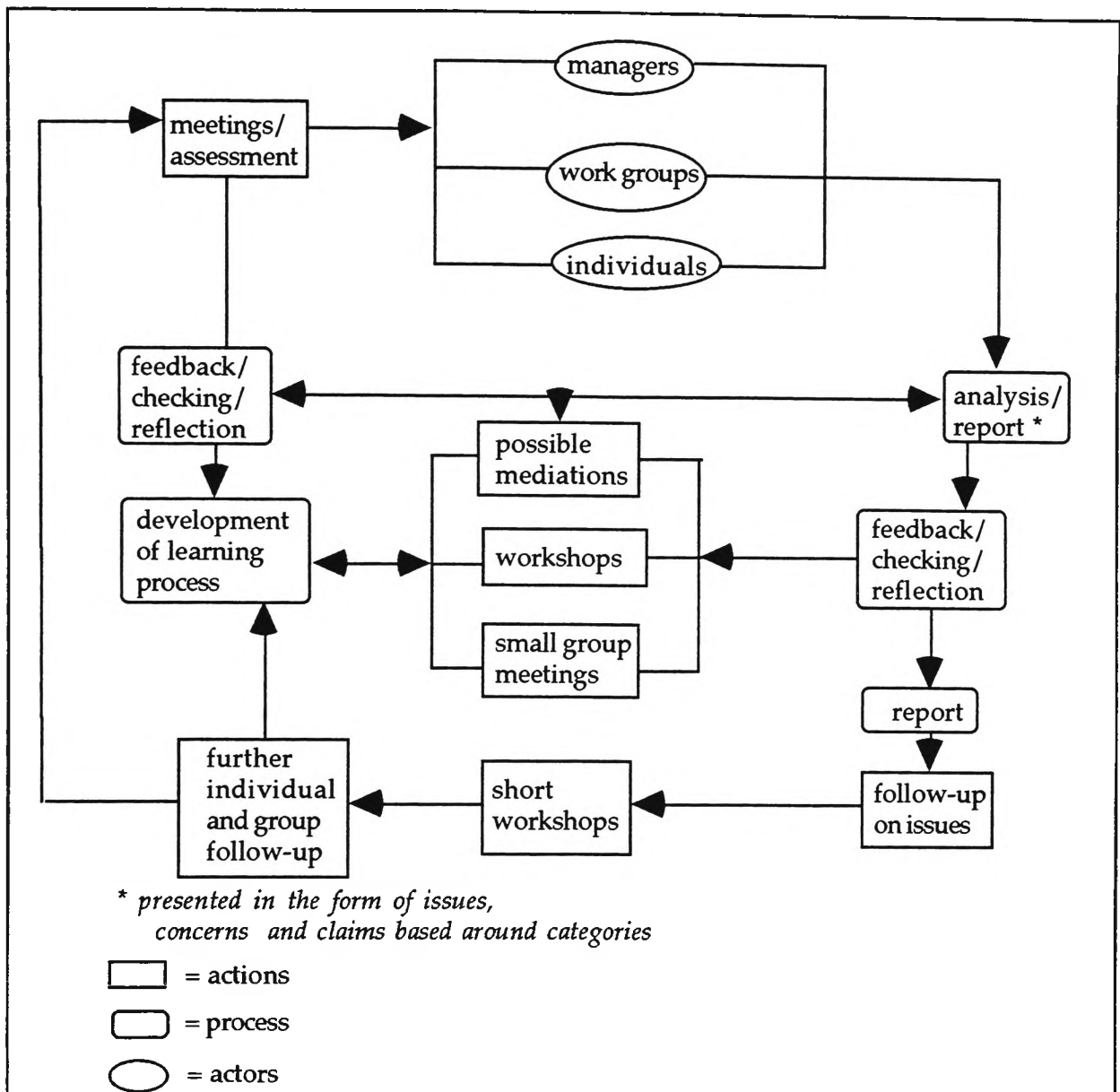


Figure 6.2

Suggested Work Plan for Formal Learning Facilitation (devised by the author)

This process, developed as a result of this study, includes ongoing, connected patterns of action. This model grew out of the data I gathered from staff members and my observations of their workplace relationships, and my role in that process. It was clear that as I returned to work with small groups or individuals, staff were able to continue to reflect on what had been happening to them and their working environment since the last time we had been together. Further, because I was able to move freely into

The findings of this study provide evidence for the efficacy of this approach. The degree of individual and team development seen indicates that there is greater value in the facilitator having continued input and interaction over a sustained period of time.

Systems Thinking as Part of Team Development

Systems thinking is not a new concept for organisations. Yet organisations do not appear to widely use or understand the concept. Managers often treat issues of team and personal-development as if they existed in isolation from other aspects of the workplace environment. They do not always recognise that corporate culture and its structure reflect upon workers' perceptions of themselves and others in the workplace and thus affect the way a team works together and its work with outside teams. Whole systems are rarely seen as the basis for dealing with day-to-day situations. 'Firefighting' often seems to be the strategy.

In order to utilise this concept of working within a system, it is essential to remain flexible in the process of team development. If team development is treated in a linear way, one is likely to bypass essential elements within the system.

None of the aspects of a team development process (as shown in Figure 6.2) can be seen as the main component. Team development is such a complex issue that it needs to be treated with an integrated approach. Each aspect has different and changing levels of importance depending on circumstances. Each component impacts on the others in a multi-dimensional framework. It is essential that all these factors are taken into account if the aim of developing constructive working groups is to be achieved.

It is essential that all these factors are taken into account if the aim of developing constructive working groups is to be achieved.

This involves an understanding of endogenous and exogenous factors that might have an effect on team learning, as shown in Figure 6.3. None of the parts can be treated in isolation from one another. They combine to form the core of the influences on learning in the developmental process of a team, which are immersed in ethical considerations. At the Centre, the external influences included: achieving government accreditation, which necessitated staff involvement in 'training'; the emphasis put on 'training' by the parent organisation; and the Director of the Centre itself (who can be seen in this case as apart from the team in her role as organiser of learning experiences for the rest of the team). Thus, the staff at the Centre were part of a bigger system, which impacted on their development as a team through formal and informal demands for them to become more informed in their professional roles.

Components That Affect Team Learning

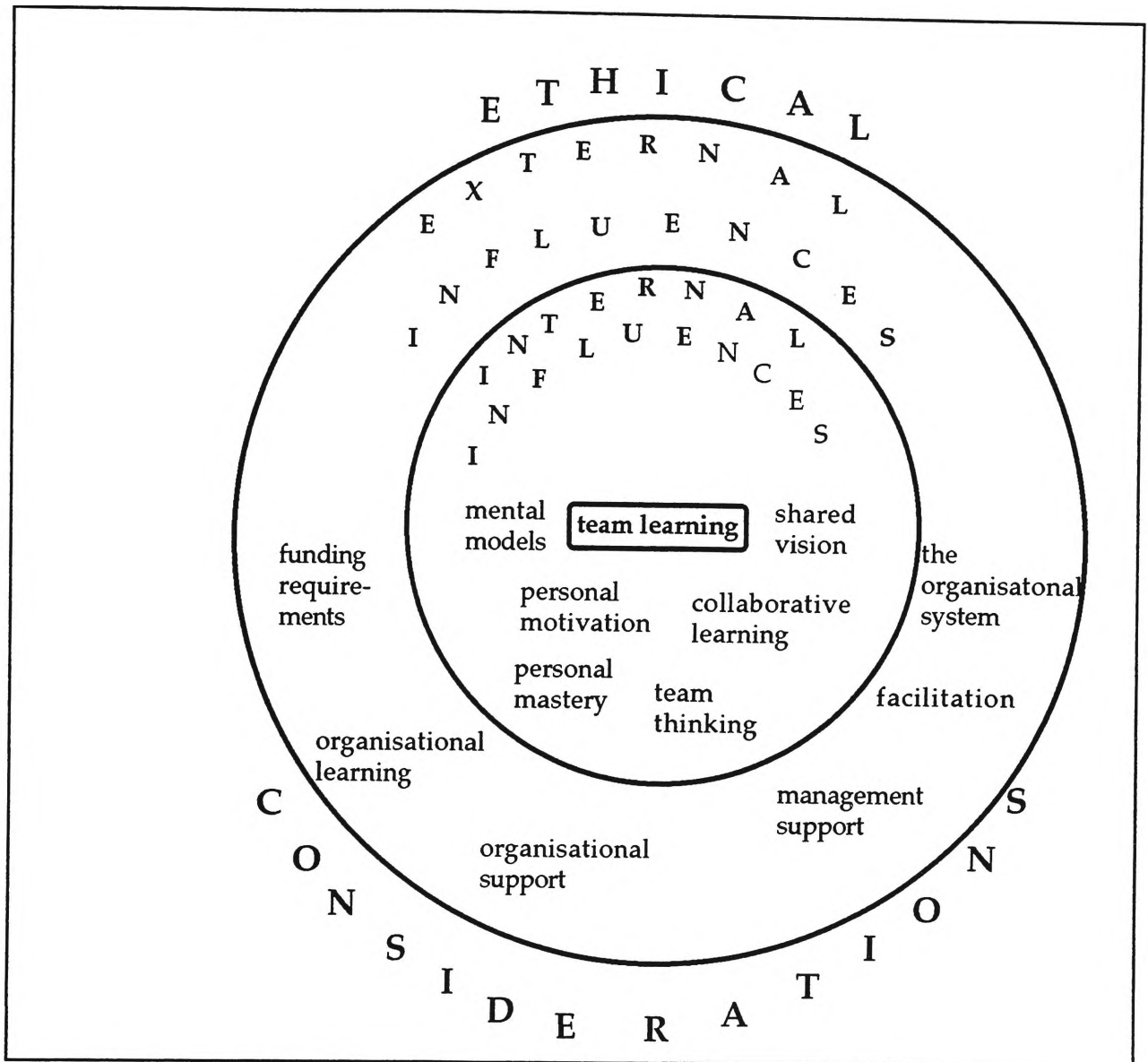


Figure 6.3
Components That Make Up Team Development in a Systems Approach (conceived by the author)

Empowerment Through Involvement

A significant factor in team development is involvement in the development and implementation of the process by all those who may be affected by possible changes. Those engaging in the management of team development need to spend at least as much time assessing the components of current situations as they do implementing changes. This involves

practice, it is necessary to consider the impact of outside influences on the team and, conversely, the influence the team may have on those with whom they come into contact in the course of their work.

The process of full staff involvement, if carried out with the clear intention of honest consultation (as opposed to 'insultation' alluded to by one of my mentors, R. Gluck) will empower staff to play a meaningful role in the changes occurring within their workplace. As a consequence, changes are more likely to be sustainable. It is important for staff to understand what is happening in their workplace at a deeper level. This involvement includes a thorough assessment and constant monitoring of processes and perceptions of staff needs. It is not a one-off event. In this study, that process was possible for me to observe and participate in, as I observed staff being included in detailed discussions about both major and minor decisions that would have an effect on them and their workplace.

Management Support

There is theoretical documentation (Jackall, 1988) to support the evidence that is apparent in this current study suggesting that involvement of management (in this case the Director) in actively promoting on-going staff consultation is highly desirable in fostering workforce support for the development and implementation of an effective team . Jackall sees management support as essential in providing participants with official confirmation that the process of team development is worthwhile. This study showed that the active involvement of the Director in the whole process of facilitated learning as part of team development encouraged the other staff to take the process seriously. She participated in all the learning activities and interviews and encouraged staff to talk about the learning

other staff to take the process seriously. She participated in all the learning activities and interviews and encouraged staff to talk about the learning experiences between sessions. The level of management support the team receives has an effect on the value staff put on formal learning and team building and will also impact on their desire to learn and change. When a complete system supports its team members, they are more likely to be supportive of the system. If this does not occur, team members may be inclined to behave in ways that are not supportive of the organisation.

External Professional Support

Providing staff with access to continuing and regular professional support from an independent person outside the organisation presents a non-threatening sounding-board. This individual can act as a release-valve for potentially stressful workplace situations. The staff at the Centre said they perceived independence that evinced autonomy and made them feel that confidentiality would be assured, allowing for greater freedom of expression. They commented that they valued this role and would ideally like to have access to this type of 'service' on a regular basis. It is not a counselling role, nor is it a pastoral role or a helping role that they were wanting. It was the role of the detached listener that most appealed to them.

Although this 'service' would (no doubt) be beneficial and insightful for many staff members, it may not be possible or practical to implement, particularly in small independent centres. Even larger organisations struggle for finances to provide adequate positions for centres. However, centres that are part of a larger corporate body may be able to find funding sources to address this concern.

Facilitated Learning in Team and Personal Development

One method organisations use to resolve complex workplace issues is by providing external learning facilitations that are not linked to any other action in the organisation. This perception was supported in this study. I was initially called in to conduct short term formal learning facilitations to address team development. When this action is taken in isolation, it can give the impression that there is an apparently simple answer to a complex situation. A more productive approach to addressing issues is to see them as part of a system and look at the complexities of that system as part of a more complete process. When issues that arise within a team are not dealt with by exploring the system as a complete entity, it is less likely that there will be positive long-term effects. The facilitator/researcher is part of that system.

Involving outside facilitators to address team development issues needs to be included as one part of an overall approach, involving the facilitator closely with the process over an extended period of time. When facilitators and staff members are able to work together in an atmosphere of mutual understanding and respect over a reasonable period of time, they can develop a coherent, realistic and shared approach to team development.

In this study, it was clear that there was an expectation from external bodies that staff members would undertake professional development courses as part of their work. This was supported by the active encouragement provided by the Director of the Centre and the willing involvement of the staff themselves in staff development courses and learning experiences provided by or through the Centre.

While facilitation of formal learning processes can be an important component of team development, it is not realistic to expect them to stand alone. The theoretical perspective of Schratz and Walker (1995) is that underlying structures and the cultural climate of the organisation affect how groups function in a workplace. This was borne out in this study and in other settings from experience in other consultancies, which suggests that teams cannot be successfully developed by one-off facilitations as the main focus. When this does happen, only superficial aspects of the issues involved will be addressed. Unless a collective and long-term approach is taken, using the skills and knowledge of all the staff involved, decisions for change may be impractical and will be less likely to be adopted by the staff. The current study indicated that facilitated learning can be a catalyst for further action, setting the tone for development and becoming part of a broad approach to change. To be used productively, facilitated learning needs to be integrated into a holistic approach to team building in an extended time-frame. As a consequence, participants are more likely to become immersed in the learning process. The staff at the Centre responded to ongoing interaction with the facilitator through their involvement with this research study. They exhibited intense interest in their development as a team, particularly in connection to their relationships with one another. This was clear through their interviews, which focussed on relationships within the team.

It is necessary for participants to be able to see where facilitation fits into the overall system in order to translate their team outcomes into practical recommendations. Facilitation for team development needs to be tailored for each group, based on initial needs assessment, and reinforced with a variety of methods and techniques to suit individual members. There is a need for the facilitator to have continuing contact with participants prior to

and following formal learning sessions to reinforce learning, to encourage peer support and to foster critical¹² thinking.

An important ingredient in successful team development facilitation is the involvement of the entire work-group in reinforcing collaborative learning and providing an opportunity for peer support. It is also important to keep in mind the boundaries and limitations of facilitation of experiential learning.

Influence of the Formal Learning Process on Team Development

A number of factors can be identified that affect facilitation of learning in a team. They include:

- introduction and lead up to formal learning processes;
- the involvement of the staff in selection of the mode of facilitation;
- willingness of staff to participate;
- the length of the program;
- on-going learning opportunities;
- follow-up activities;
- type and style of facilitation;
- integrity of the facilitation and the facilitator;
- credibility given to the facilitation through the involvement of management
- integration of the facilitated learning into the wider system of work.

Each of these factors was addressed in this study. The staff were given the opportunity to choose whether they wanted to include personal development exercises in a team building process as part of their usual staff development plan. They all showed a willingness to participate in the formal learning process, except for some of the ancillary staff, who were not coerced into attending. As mentioned earlier in this chapter and others, the

¹² As noted in Chapter Two "critical" thinking does not infer destructive reasoning; rather it is thinking in an analytical sense with discrimination.

length of time dedicated to formal learning has an effect on the impact of the program. Due to the staff's participation in this research project, they were given the opportunity to be involved in formal and casual learning situations with the facilitator over a two-year period (an opportunity not usually available to staff at child care centres).

This extended involvement allowed for follow-up activities to occur through several avenues. As noted earlier, I provided extra formal facilitations, held individual interviews with the staff, participated in staff meeting discussions, held casual conversations with staff and participated in daily activities in the Centre. Also as noted, the opportunity that staff were given to review this thesis before submission provided them with further opportunity to reflect on what had happened during the course of this study in relation to their team development.

The results of the study indicated that the personal development exercises in which the staff members participated had an effect on their workplace relationships through their heightened awareness and understanding of their own and others' behaviours. The interactive and accepting style of the facilitation and my constant awareness of the need for carefully monitoring the ethical issues that are raised in these type of exercises, due to the impact they might have on the participants, was noted and appreciated by the staff. It was clear from the analysis of the data that the support and involvement of the Director and the parent organisation provided a strong incentive for other staff to actively participate in the formal learning and research processes that were part of this research. The research process itself provided a vehicle for extensive involvement in team development activities.

Components of Facilitation that Affect Formal Learning Situations in a Workplace

If facilitation of formal learning is going to be an effective part of the team building program (particularly in the personal development realm), it must cater for participants' individual needs and learning styles. The materials offered in support of the process must be seen by participants as relevant, clear and interesting. Facilitation strategies will preferably include interactive and personal approaches to learning through a variety of techniques. This can involve listening, talking and sharing in large and small groups, writing, reading, brainstorming, artwork, and role playing. It is necessary to take the personal relationships and organisational expectations surrounding the participants into account. When these methods are incorporated into an ongoing team-learning process, they provide a shared meaning, a discourse, that encourages positive changes in professional relationships.

The Place of Critical Thinking in Team Building

Staff involvement in critical and reflective thinking about workplace practices and relationships is an essential part of team building. Time needs to be set aside to provide a forum for the continuous and regular assessment of workplace development.

In order to utilise these many factors as positive influences for change, it is essential that a work group engage in consistent and sustained critical and reflective thinking practices about how the workplace functions as a basis for appropriate changes. Reflective practice can begin with formal facilitation processes and continue as a natural part of the way a team operates to

sustain team development and the maintenance of personal growth. When staff are provided with opportunities for reflective and critical thinking, they will often find their own answers to problems in the workplace.

The Influence of the Facilitator/Researcher in Reflective Practice

The roles of a facilitator/researcher overlap. She does not provide answers to problems, rather, she creates opportunities for staff to gain new perspectives on pre-existing problems and leads them on a path of reflective thinking. An essential component of the responsibility of a facilitator/researcher in a team development situation is to encourage and support reflective thinking. This is fostered by developing a rapport with the participants.

Access to a group for an extended period will allow this rapport to develop, as the facilitator becomes more familiar with the situation and staff develop a relationship with her with an expectation to challenge their thinking.

Personal Understanding within a Team

Team development can be fostered through experiential exercises designed to encourage a personal understanding and recognition of the factors involved in peer relationships. This can provide an environment that encourages the fostering of positive changes in workplace relationships. However, the effects of this formal learning may not be immediately noticeable. Even so, every experience that people have has an effect on their lives in some way. When people get to know themselves better, and develop a knowledgeable perspective of their role in group interactions, they can adapt their behaviour for their own, and consequently, the group's

benefit. If they are unaware of the effect these behaviours may be having on themselves and their peers, their activities may lose direction.

Ethical Considerations

This study supports the view of Boud and Cohen (1995) that the development of a close relationship between the staff and the facilitator/researcher in experiential processes can have both positive and negative impacts on a team development process. They commented that because experiential facilitators intervene in the lives of other people some change will occur in those people's lives. This creates a clear need for awareness of ethical considerations by the facilitator/researcher which can be addressed through dialogue, collaboration and critical reflection by the facilitator/researcher. During the conduct of the experiential exercises at the Centre, particularly the D.I.S.C. exercise, I was acutely aware of the need to be aware of, and raise the awareness of staff of the possible risks in doing an exercise that could stereotype people and create personal expectations for them that may be illusory. Tom (1984) further comments that we need to take great care when facilitating personal development processes because our actions affect other people's lives. He also refers to the participant/facilitator relationship as an inherently moral one, grounded in the inequality of the relationship. The facilitator has control over developing the process in directions she chooses and is often seen as the 'expert' in the area she is presenting. The evidence from this study supported this perception as staff members commented on the impact on them of my involvement and input through the material that I presented.

The other aspect that Tom commented upon, and which relates to this study, is the sanction of the institution that the process carries with it and

the pressure this could place on staff to participate. In this study, it appears that staff felt relatively free to make choices in relation to participation, which was demonstrated by the choice of ancillary staff not to be involved in the learning exercises, and also by one of the staff members, who was cautious about the interview process of the study, choosing not to take part (formally) in this activity.

There are also personal ethical issues that surround the experience of people being involved in a process of personal development in a workplace where they are critiquing their own behaviours and their relationships with their peers. One of these concerns is the possible misuse of information by peers or those in powerful positions in the organisation. People can misinterpret what they hear as they put their own construct on events, such as interpretation of the phrase used in my facilitations in the discussion on conflict: "Conflict! Ah! What an opportunity!" This phrase could be used as an encouragement to create conflict; to accept conflict and not address the causes; or to 'read' the word 'conflict' as 'crisis', which has a different meaning in this context.

The facilitator of experiential learning must have a high level of awareness, knowledge and expertise to be able to act in the best interests of the participants in this regard. She needs to be very aware of the faith the staff may place in her and the reliance that can develop on her 'expertise'. Blind faith in a facilitator without critical thinking can be a hazardous enterprise for those involved. In this study, evidence of this situation arose out of the D.I.S.C exercise when one of the staff members moved her position in the quadrants because, as she stated, I, as the facilitator, had said that it was acceptable to move. Opportunities need to be created for participants to pursue concerns that arise during personal development facilitations.

It is difficult to address all ethical issues simultaneously, and a constant questioning, reviewing and reflection of events must be undertaken by the facilitator. The facilitator needs to arrange time for herself, within the team development process, to pause and think about the people and issues involved in a facilitation or a research process to assess the possible impact on those involved - including themselves.

While it is necessary to be aware of the possible risks of using personal development exercises with people in a workplace, it does not mean that they should be entirely discarded as a tool for team development. They can be a very valuable aid when applied appropriately. The most important ethical aspect of using this type of exercise is the awareness of the risks and the consequent actions that surround the events.

SCOPE OF THIS RESEARCH

This study looked at one child care centre. While there can be some transferability from one similar setting to another, findings cannot be generalised. Staff in each workplace need to examine their own position, and this study has provided a basis from which this examination can be done.

It was never my intention that the theory presented in this study would discuss all possible effects that a facilitator/researcher working in the area of personal development could have on the development of a team. Nor was it designed to provide absolute answers to formal learning and development for team building. There are too many variables involved to

be able to provide a 'generic' blueprint for each worksite or to categorically state that a particular model is 'state of the art.'

It was not within the scope of this thesis to follow each aspect of personal development facilitation and team development that has arisen as a result of this study. There is room for more in-depth research in many areas, such as developing the motivation (or lack of motivation) for workplaces to use long-term, comprehensive analysis in facilitation and follow-up actions as part of a holistic approach to team development. It would be interesting to see more clearly how a systems approach to team development impacts on a team in comparison to other, more narrow, approaches. The dynamics of a team and what causes the members of one team to act in a certain way, compared to another team, would also be of interest in relation to the corporate culture of the organisation and their level of systems thinking.

There is also scope to look more closely at the variables of facilitation in experiential learning that have an effect on team development. The elements in particular teams that lead to the use of formal learning in constructive ways provides another area for investigation. There is also a need to consider more extensively the long-term effects of ongoing facilitation and relationships with a facilitator. A further opening exists for the exploration of how the experience of personal development facilitation within team development affects the wider system in which the team is involved.

Other areas for investigation include assessment of the optimum amount and type of learning that would be most effective in developing teams; the possibility for an organisation to consult with all its workers in relation to change processes to develop teams; how much the issue of personal

relationships plays a part in the development of a team, compared to other influences; and how the process of reflective and critical thinking translates into relationships in a workplace and how it affects the ongoing development of the working group in either constructive or destructive ways.

SUMMING UP

There are many facets that influence team development. The use of formal learning in the realm of personal development can be part of that maturation.

Teams are not discrete entities that exist within themselves. They are part of a much larger picture and are affected by internal and external relationships and events. Unless a team is considered within the system in which it exists, any changes that may occur can be easily undermined by other forces. Difficulties within a team will most likely continue to arise until the whole system is addressed. A vital influence on this development is the level of support and involvement by management. Professional external support on an on-going basis can add to the process when there is an opportunity for a lasting relationship to develop between a facilitator and a working group.

When formal learning is used as part of the development process, there are a number of crucial elements involved in its outcome. The content, the setting in which the facilitation takes place, the nature and level of involvement of the entire team, the purpose of the facilitation (who has requested it and for what reason), the relationship developed between the facilitator and the participants, and staff acceptance of its value all play their

part in acceptance of the learning experience. Through formal facilitation in experiential learning by someone external, the reflective process can begin and be continued through regular opportunities for reflection on work practices and relationships. It is imperative that ethical issues be constantly addressed by those who are facilitating team-learning and those who are participating in the process of formal facilitations because the participants are exposed to personal risks of working with others in areas of personal development that may affect the quality of their lives.

This research has not provided all the answers needed to ensure successful formal experiential learning and team building. Its purpose was to generate theories as part of an ongoing process to find answers that in themselves raise more questions. It is comforting to know that Socrates thought the same way. He considered that the meaning of how we live is never answered (in Nelson, 1995). Nor does the process of personal and team development through facilitation of formal experiential learning end - it merely leads to new avenues for further exploration.

Inquiries "never stop; they merely pause" (Guba & Lincoln, 1989).

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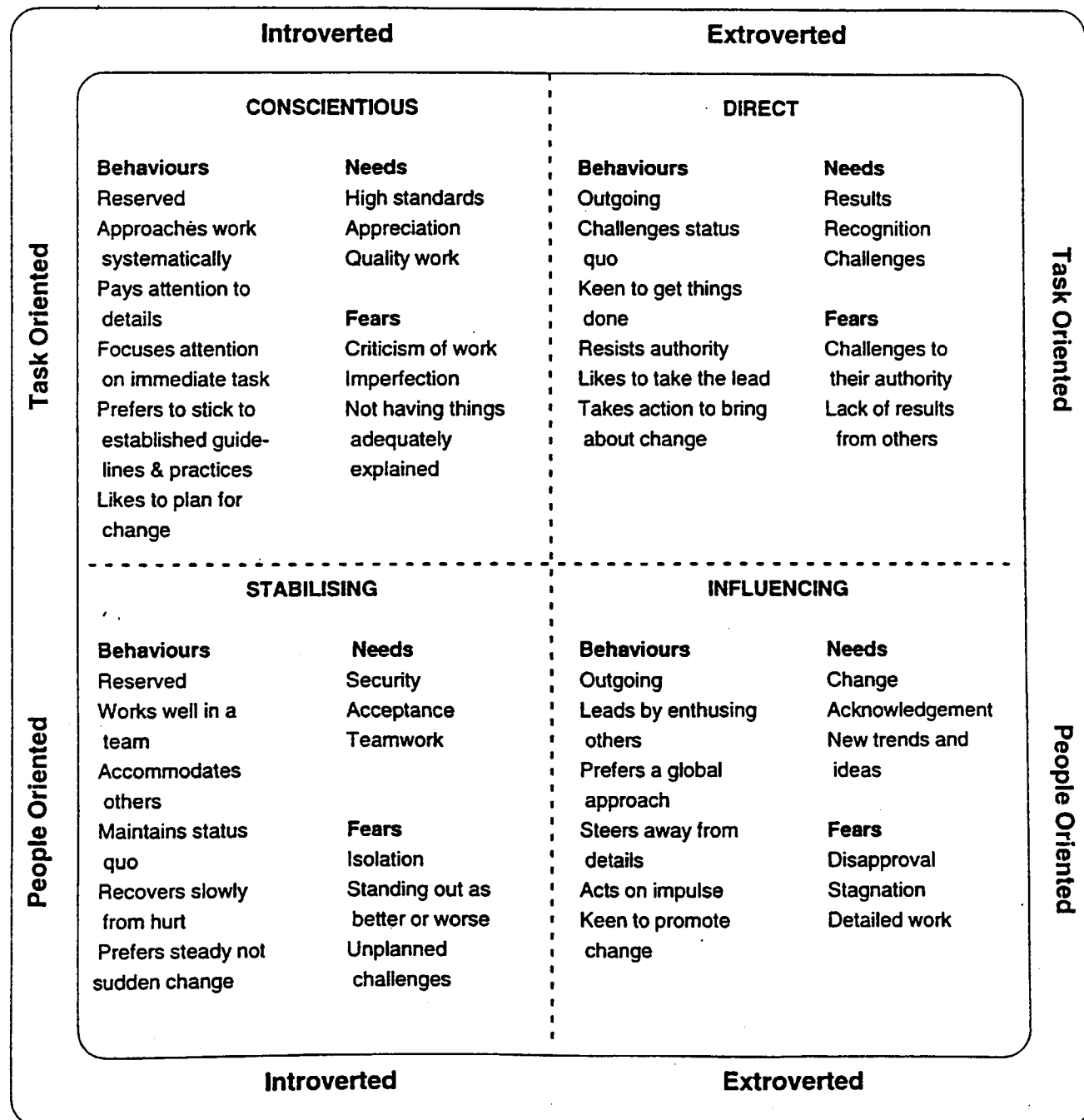
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APPENDICES

People have a variety of preferred and habitual ways of behaving and responding, depending on the context. When communication is difficult, it can be helpful to tailor your approach to suit others' preferences and habits.

Within any behavioural style, people can be both skilled at getting the job done and getting along with others.

Once aware of areas needing improvement, people can often develop new skills, to increase the flexibility of their behavioural repertoire.



The DISC Model was initiated by Performax as part of their Personal Profile System. For more information on questionnaires and courses contact:

Australian Distributor, Integro Learning Systems P/L, PO Box 483, Dee Why NSW 2099.



“In this activity you will be asked to move to one of four areas in the room. Each area represents a particular behavioural style. It is not about labelling or being categorised, but about tendencies. We all have aspects of each style but tend to lean towards one particular style especially when under stress.No behavioural style is better or worse than any other; each has its own strengths. Moving into one area is not a final decision. At any point during the exercise participants may change areas.

The purposes of the activity are:

- to consider the different types of behaviours we choose in different settings;
- to identify the behavioural styles we frequently use; and
- to understand behavioural styles that are different from our own.

Think of how you behave at work.

If you are more reserved and reflective move to (my) right or more outgoing and extroverted, move to (my) left.

(To the more outgoing group) Move to the front of the room if you seek challenges, focus on achieving results, get the job done fast and efficiently. Move to the back of the room if you generate enthusiasm in others, focus on the overall vision, like working with others, skim over the details.

(To the more reserved group) Move to the front of the room if you pay attention to detail, approach tasks systematically, set very high standards. Move to the back of the room if you work well as part of a team, take time to listen and consult with others, smooth problems over to maintain good relationships.”

Extensive discussion follows on traits of each group, how they perceive the differences and their own behaviours.

- Have you noticed any changes at work since we did the D.I.S.C.?
- Did you experience any negatives or things that were not so good as a result of the exercises?
- How do you feel about me taking notes?
- What are your Concerns about the research, the (personality-type) exercise, my role here?
- What issues have arisen as a result of the (personality-type) exercise?
- What do you think it achieved?
- What did you get out of it?
- What made you choose this type of [facilitated learning] for your staff? (for the director)
- Have you used it before? (for the director)
- With what results? (for the director)
- Would you use it (or a similar process) again? (for the director)
- What are the reasons for this? (for the director)
- Did the [facilitated learning] meet your needs? fully/partly/not at all. (for the director)
- What was the most useful part of the [facilitated learning]?
- What was the least useful part of the [facilitated learning]?
- Has it changed in any way the way you work with the team you are in or were in then?
- What changes would you make to the [facilitated learning]?
- How will you use what you have learned in your job?
- Have you ever done a personality type assessment before?
- What do you remember most about it?
- Do you know what personality types the people are who you work with?
- If 'Yes' does it make a difference to how you work with them?

- For what purpose am I engaged in personal development facilitation?
- What do I think it achieves?
- What made me choose this type of learning exercise to present as team development?
- What are my main concerns?
- How do I address these issues?
- What do I do about the issue of people in the team using information gained in these exercises against other team members?
- What did I get out of it?
- What has been my past experience of this exercise?
- Would I use it (or a similar process) again?
- What are the reasons for this?
- What have been the implications of doing the D.I.S.C. exercise?
- Am I pleased I did it? For what reasons?
- Do I think it will help or hinder staff members working with their peers?
- What do I see as my role as a facilitator in workplaces?
- How do I address learners' needs?
- What facilitation skills and understanding do I have?
- How do I approach the confidentiality aspect of the facilitation and reporting?
- What do I see as important in the external environment to the learning?
- How much do I see of this type of exercise to be of a counselling nature and what do I do with situations that may personally impact to participants?
- What do I expect to be able to give to participants, how and for what purpose?
- What is my general approach to using the D.I.S.C. exercise in workplaces?
- Confidentiality - how do I approach this aspect of the facilitation and reporting?
- Environmental - what do I see as important in the external environment to the facilitation exercises?
- What do I expect to be able to give, how and for what purpose?



University of Wollongong

Human Research Ethics Committee

CONSENT FORM

**THE ETHICS AND EFFICACY OF PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT TRAINING
IN THE WORKPLACE**

RESEARCHER: CECILY BOAS

**SUPERVISORS: DR WILMA VIALLE and PROFESSOR RON KING
FACULTY OF EDUCATION
UNIVERSITY OF WOLLONGONG**

This research project is being conducted as part of an Honours Masters Degree supervised by Dr Wilma Vialle and Professor Ron King in the Faculty of Education at the University of Wollongong.

The research seeks to explore the effects that personality-type training can have on staff in the workplace. The purpose is to find out whether there are any positive and/or negative circumstances attaching to completion of this form of exercise in a workplace.

An initial training session in personality types, based on the D.I.S.C. model from the Conflict Resolution Network, will be followed by discussions with staff both in staff meetings and individually. Other training sessions will follow.

The researcher will also visit the Centre during working times to talk with staff when appropriate and to gain an understanding of the workplace and how it operates. This will enable a more complete picture of the working environment.

The confidentiality of any and all disclosures will be maintained absolutely. Only after each individual has viewed the transcribed material and approved of its use, will it be incorporated into the final publication. Permission for use of this material can be withdrawn at any time by any participant.

All staff involved will be encouraged to comment on and make suggestions

about the research process..

I have wide experience as a trainer, conflict resolution consultant and mediator in addition to my work in early childhood teaching, special education and teaching in early childhood studies, so I hope to be able to provide some direct benefits to staff during the course of this research.

You are free to withdraw from the research at anytime without penalty.

If you have any inquiries regarding the conduct of the research please contact the Secretary of the University of Wollongong Human Research Ethics Committee on 042 213079.

Yours sincerely,

Cecily Boas

I understand that the data collected will be used for a thesis and I consent for the data to be used in that manner.

If you wish to take part in this research please sign below:

..... /...../.....



University of Wollongong

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Principle 14: Staff communicate well with each other

Effective communication is crucial in the development of trust and respect between individual staff members, to provide information and gather feedback about the children and the program and to help avoid misunderstanding and conflict.

Communicating well with each other will also help staff to establish and maintain good relationships with the children and their parents.

Staff who are able to relate to each other as individuals will appreciate each other's individual needs and interests. Good morale in the staff team depends on good communication skills.

Staff also have a responsibility to provide a model of effective working relationships for the children, who are developing their own social skills.

Unsatisfactory:	Staff do not communicate effectively with each other Staff do not cooperate as a team.
Basic:	Staff talk to each other in a friendly and courteous manner.
Good quality:	Staff express themselves clearly and listen to each other. Staff are aware of the importance of a team approach.
High quality:	Staff work very effectively as a team. Staff discuss and resolve differences amongst themselves.

Principle 50: The centre provides regular learning and training opportunities for staff

The quality of the program in a centre depends on staff having up-t-date knowledge and understanding about the development of children. Pre-service and in-service courses provide the necessary training, and participation in these courses should be not only permitted but encouraged. Research has indicated that trained staff deliver care that better enhances the development of children than does the care delivered by untrained staff.

Collecting information helps to identify training needs and to plan in-service programs; a needs-assessment (or staff evaluation) survey will identify staff strengths and weaknesses.

All available training resources should be considered - staff could share their own expertise by organising workshops for their colleagues, short courses may be available at a local TAFE college or university, staff from different centres could exchange specific expertise. Conferences and seminars also provide an opportunity for staff to meet other people in the same field and exchange experiences.

It is important to reinforce in-service training. One way to achieve this is by using an evaluation form; this can also provide information that can be used in planning future training workshops. Application of the content of training sessions to the actual program needs to be monitored. Discussion should be scheduled for the staff meeting that follows each training course, and the value of the course evaluated in these terms of benefits and costs.

Specialist topics such as child abuse, nutrition and infection diseases need appropriate training and expertise.

ACCREDITATION PROGRAM (1994)

Principle 15: Staff show respect for other members of the team

Staff need to respect the knowledge and skills that each staff member brings to the centre and to respect each other's feelings, views and opinions. Rather than assert and rebut, staff members should listen to what the others are saying and try to ensure that they understand. It is important to compliment others for good initiatives and ideas and when things have gone well. It is also important to work as a team to plan and discuss the program.

When a problem arises, for example about the management of children in a group, staff may disagree on how the problem should be handled and resolved but should discuss it openly. Generally, the staff concerned should be able to resolve the problem themselves; if not, then they should seek the advice of the person to whom they are responsible.

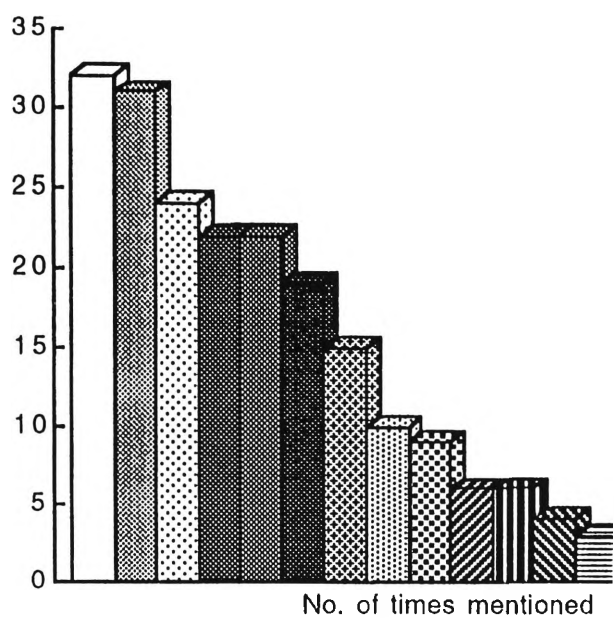
Staff work independently, with little consideration of each other's needs and interests.

Unsatisfactory:	Staff work independently, with little consideration of each other's needs and interests.
Basic:	Staff members show respect for each other and listen to different points of view.
Good quality:	Staff members value the different backgrounds, attitudes and beliefs of each other.
High quality:	Staff frequently share their knowledge and experience.

APPENDIX 9 Categories from Staff Interviews to 23/7/95
(number of times categories were mentioned in fifteen
interviews with ten staff)

Categories	No. of times mentioned
dealing with feelings/coping	32
team work and relationships	31
roles and responsibilities	24
self analysis	22
analysis of others	22
(training) effectiveness	19
professional v personal	15
management responsibilities	10
professionalism	9
communication	6
work environment	6
women working together	4
standard of work	3
professional respect	3
modelling	3
age	3
boredom	3
confidentiality and privacy	2

Categories





- ☐ dealing with feelings/coping
- ☒ team work
- ☒ roles and responsibilities
- ☒ self analysis
- ☒ analysis of others
- ☒ training effectiveness
- ☒ professional v personal
- ☒ management responsibilities
- ☒ professionalism
- ☒ communication
- ☒ work environment
- ☒ women working together
- ☒ standard of work
- ☒ professional respect
- ☒ modelling
- ☒ age
- ☒ boredom

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